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THE BEQUEST OF

EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
CLASS OF 1882
OF NEW YORK

1918

MARRIAGE.

MARRIAGE;

A Comedy,

IN FIVE ACTS,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE ROYAL HAYMARKET,

ON THE 27TH JANUARY, 1842.

BY ROBERT BELL, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "LIVES OF THE POETS," &C.

LONDON:

LONGMAN AND CO. PATERNOSTER ROW.

1842.

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FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

23-55
21

TO

SIR NICHOLAS HARRIS NICOLAS,

G. C. M. G., &c.

My dear Sir Harris,

Will you take this Comedy under your protection? It stands in need of some friendly shelter; and I know of no one to whom I can confide it with more confidence of liberal treatment. I wish it were a worthier tribute to your great and distinguished talents; it would then present a more adequate expression of the earnest personal regard with which

I remain,

My dear Sir Harris,

Yours, very faithfully,

ROBERT BELL.

Chiswick,
26th Jan. 1842.

ADVERTISEMENT.

I CANNOT commit this Comedy to the press without expressing how largely I am indebted to the judgment and energy of Mr. Webster in its introduction to the stage. The successful efforts of that gentleman for the restoration of genuine English comedy, led me originally to contemplate the design of submitting this production to the public. His frank reception of the play confirmed me in it. This acknowledgment is due to Mr. Webster; although I am aware it can add nothing to his well-won popularity—a popularity of which he alone seems to be unconscious.

The highest obligation a dramatist can be laid under is in the recognition of the claims of the drama over the conventions, and occasionally exorbitant demands of the stage. I owe special thanks on this ground to Mr. Webster, and the Haymarket company, less for myself than for the interests of dramatic literature. This Comedy, which was not written with a view to any particular actors, has not been deformed in its progress to representation for the purpose of shaping and fitting it to individual pretensions. The most cordial desire was exhibited on all sides to give full effect to the *ensemble,* at no slight sacrifices of personal position. I am deeply sensible of the kindness of those performers who, for the sake of imparting strength and vitality to the

scene, cheerfully undertook parts which I regret are so much below their merits. But it is by such generous emulation that the drama and its expounders act and re-act upon each other, ennobling and elevating their common office of holding "the mirror up to Nature."

These sheets will be printed before the fate of the Comedy can be known; but should it fail in representation, it cannot be from any want of talent in the actors, or skill and expenditure in the *mise en scène.*

There are some trifling differences between the acted and the printed play, consisting of slight omissions in the representation, to bring the performance within the usual limits of time. I did not think it necessary to adopt for the closet those curtailments that were resorted to only for the convenience of the stage.

CHARACTERS.

Sir Harry Vivid	{M.P. for Middleton Regis}	. Mr. Wallack.
Hon. Cavendish Pause		. Mr. Wrench.
Mr. Doubtful		. Mr. Strickland.
Mr. Baldwin		. Mr. Stuart.
Mr. Wortley		. Mr. H. Wallack.
Mr. Wyndham		. Mr. Howe.
Drouk		. Mr. Webster.
Sir Hyacinth Sharp		. Mr. Worrell.
Mr. Shadow		. Mr. F. Webster.
Mr. Grub (*an Editor*)		. Mr. Gough.
Gasp, Ribs, Tumble	*Committee of the Pro Bono Publico Society.*	Mr. Clarke, Mr. Gallot, Mr. T.F.Mathews;
Charles (*Sir Harry's Servant*)		. Mr. Caulfield.

Adelaide Temple		. Miss Charles.
Fanny Belgrave		. Miss C. Connor.
Mrs. Doubtful		. Miss Maywood.
Clara		. Mrs. E. Yarnold.
Lady Pierrepoint	*Ladies Patronesses.*	Mrs. W. Clifford.
Lady Blaize		Miss Connor.
Lady Matchmaker		Mrs. Woulds.
Mrs. Grant		Mrs. Stanley.
Miss Cast-off		Miss Mattley.
Lucy		. Mrs.T.F.Mathews.

Attendants, Guests, &c.

Scene.—London.

PROLOGUE.

SPOKEN BY MR. STUART.

THE good old custom of an elder day,
When Prologue raised the curtain to the play,
And sprightly Epilogue came tittering after,
To draw it down again with roars of laughter,
Has been abandoned in this railroad age,
That you might steam more quickly o'er the stage.

But, in a reverend love of the old times,
Our author with preliminary rhymes,
What Shakspeare sanctioned would for once renew,
And in the antique fashion plead to *you*.

Our Comedy to-night has no pretence
To verbal wit, or tinsel eloquence;
No maudlin sorrow, no theatric art,
With skilful commonplace assails the heart;
No tangled plots on mysteries supervene,
Nor startling tableaux crown the complex scene.
The humour that descends to low grimace,
With grossness poisoning mirth, has *here* no place;

Exhausted jokes our author dares to shun,
Nor gives us one resuscitated pun.

On general truth alone our scenes depend—
Gay life our means, and married life our end;
To show, in this great, populous, social hive,
How drones sip honey, and how queen-bees live.

If this design be fairly carried on,
Without excess of shadow or of sun;
If such materials as we daily see
Crowding your west-end living comedy,
Be here reflected justly, will you smile
In kind approval on the poet's toil?
We know on what slight things success has turned,
Th' inconstant weather, or a ball adjourned—
How dinner—ominous deed!—despatched in haste,
Or corked champagne, has spoiled the critic's taste;
How biliary ducts deranged have ruined all,
Changing five acts of glee to five of gall.

But since there's no appellate jurisdiction,
And *you* decide the poet's fate and fiction—
Be gentle in your censure—his whole trust is
Reposed upon your candour and your justice.

MARRIAGE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

LADY BELGRAVE'S. WORTLEY *discovered at a table, sealing letters.* SERVANT *in waiting.*

WORTLEY.

THERE—deliver these letters. Tell Lady Susan that my ward, Miss Temple, and I have just arrived in town, and are to be found at Lady Belgrave's. (*Exit* SERVANT.) There ought to be two Almanacks—one for Nature, and another for Fashion, since their systems of time are diametrically opposite: candle-light for sunlight—midday breakfasts, and midnight dinners! Nobody can be at ease with such habits—nobody can be comfortable. This is the London season—though one can fancy cucumbers growing in the Sun! but here we must stay, till the fresh air comes into fashion again.

Enter ADELAIDE TEMPLE *and* FANNY BELGRAVE.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

What's that you said about fashion, guardy?

WORTLEY.

Merely regretting, child, that it did not allow us to stay another month in the country.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Now, that's a Gothic speech. Who could think of staying in the country, when the whole world's in town ?

WORTLEY.

And pray, Addy, my love, who is the whole world ?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

A mystery. It governs us all, we know not how—and we are all afraid of its opinions, we know not why. Are you prosperous ?—the whole world courts you. Are you poor ?—it passes you by in profound silence. If you commit one error, the whole world will hear of it; but you may do a thousand generous actions, and the world will never trouble its head about them. To live *out* of the world is social death—to live *in* it is one of the indispensable conditions of fashionable life.

WORTLEY.

Which means that you must dance attendance on all the absurdities of the day. Well, well, you see, girls, how an old fool practises his own precepts. I hate London as long as there is a leaf to be seen on a tree; yet for all that, here I am in the midst of your follies, as hearty and willing as the best of you. I have written to all our friends to announce your arrival; and hark ye, Addy, I have sent to—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Who, my dear guardy ?

WORTLEY.

A very old friend.

ADELAIDE (*turning away*).

Very old?—I don't want old friends.

WORTLEY.

Eight-and-twenty I suppose is antediluvian.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Take care what you do in my name. You know I was one-and-twenty yesterday, and eight-and-twenty is a very dangerous age.

WORTLEY.

And Sir Harry Vivid is a very dangerous man!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Sir Harry Vivid!—his reputation spoils him.

WORTLEY.

Now what objection is there to Sir Harry? He is young, handsome, of an old family, and possessed of an ample fortune—(*aside*) if he hasn't squandered it away!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Why he is everybody's Sir Harry. Go where you will you hear of nothing but Sir Harry—Sir Harry—Sir Harry—he is the all in all—the great wheel on which the mill of conversation works—he is ground into one's ears at every turn.

WORTLEY.

Well, let Sir Harry vindicate himself. I foresee that my defence will only get him deeper into your black books, so I'll trust his character between you. I dare say you'll find out *some* merit in him when you're left to yourselves. [*Exit.*

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Now, Adelaide, tell me all about Brighton. What company had you there?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! much the same as usual. Every day the same mob of idlers.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

No new faces?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Yes! There was a tall duke with two muscular daughters, who used to come out every morning to exercise, with the punctuality of dragoon horses. Such a pace as they had! such whipcord sinews!—you would think they were training for a marching regiment.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

What a caricature!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Sir William Hope used to give routs three times a week. Poor Sir William!—everybody lives on him at Brighton. His whole life is devoted to making acquaintances, and his whole fortune to entertaining them. They have the ill-nature to call him the hare with many friends; and they say that when his estate is exhausted, and nothing more can be got out of him, his miscellaneous guests will convert him into hare-soup!

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Ha! ha! ha!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Then we had a *divorcée*—a splendid-looking person—and the shocking creature had the audacity to appear openly in public with her gallant.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

But why doesn't she marry him?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Because, my dear, he is married already!

FANNY BELGRAVE.

What a piece of scandal! and amongst all these varieties of character, not one made any particular impression?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Not one. There was a strange, solemn creature in the crowd who created a vague interest in my mind, because I couldn't tell what to make of him—a sort of idle curiosity to know how he would come out in the end; just the kind of fidget you feel about a mysterious character in a novel. He was reserved almost to silence; but he would stand and look —so—with a throng of wishes in his eyes—and follow you round the room with his intense gaze. He seldom spoke, and nobody listened to him when he did.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Well, and what used he talk about?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! it was not what he talked about that struck me; but his tone: such a deep, grave tone, Fanny—so mellow, so funereal; poor fellow! he fancied I understood him, which I honestly confess I did not.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

And what was this singular gentleman's name?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Baldwin.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

I shouldn't like Sir Harry to know all this.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

How you plague me about Sir Harry! I tell you I do not even think favourably of the man.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Pourquoi?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I have heard such disreputable stories about him.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

But are you sure all these stories are true?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Why should I trouble myself to make sure of them? It's no business of mine. Sir Harry has gone into parliament—the last place in the world he was fit for—and between Bellamy's and the club-houses, and late hours and the associations they lead to, it is easy to foresee what will become of him. Sir Harry was utterly unfit for parliament. It will certainly ruin his health. I wish you would talk of something else. What visiters have you now?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Our circle is very limited. The Hon. Cavendish Pause and Mr. Wyndham—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

The latter of whom, but for Miss Belgrave's blushes, ought to have been named first. Is your sentimental union never to take place? How long is poor Wyndham to protest, and Fanny to coquet with the man's heart?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Why—it is not unlikely—that—when my aunt returns—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

When my aunt returns! Last winter it was,—"When my aunt recovers from her cough"— which cough, I suppose, lasted all through the summer; and now, "my aunt" is out of town, and we must wait until she returns.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

You would not have me too sudden in the affair?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! dear, no—but one would think that three years and a half, during which time Wyndham has been accepted to my knowledge, is, in all conscience, a reasonable time to take in naming the day.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Well, you shall not have much longer cause of complaint against me. Do you recollect the Hon. Cavendish Pause?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I don't think I ever saw him.

FANNY TEMPLE.

He is quite a study in natural history. He is a bachelor at fifty—has been for a quarter of a century in daily expectation of succeeding to the titles and estates of his brother, Lord Ryedale; but he has such an odd notion of the dignity of the peerage that nothing, I believe, could tempt him to marry as long as he remains the Hon. Cavendish Pause. It is said that he honours me with more than an ordinary share of his good opinion, but I never could discover it by his manner. He is like Mahomet's coffin, suspended between two points of attraction—a wife and a title.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

What an entertaining fool it must be!

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Vastly amusing, I assure you. His favourite phrase is an epitome of indecision. Every thing, the best and the worst, he takes—such as it is—(*mimics*). He qualifies good and bad alike—hates the foggy weather— such as it is: is greatly indebted to your goodness—such as it is—and praises your beauty to the skies—such as it is.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

You must introduce him without loss of time. His humours will be quite a treat—(*looks at her watch*). Would you believe it? It is four o'clock! Here we have lost the whole morning chattering instead of going to the exhibition: lud-a-mercy! child, you do not know the value of time. If we go on this way to the end of the season, we shall positively have lived in vain. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

BALDWIN'S *Lodgings.* *Enter* BALDWIN *and* DROUK.

BALDWIN.

You do not understand me. And this affair is of such moment to me.

DROUK.

Eugh! What are you but what I could unmake you in a word?

BALDWIN.

Is this generous, Drouk?—Is it just?

DROUK.

Bagh! When we're alone, why don't you drop your affectation and speak out.

BALDWIN.

If I appear other than you know me, it is because circumstances and habit have rendered it necessary. It is my luck, or destiny, or what you will, to move on the surface in the face of the world, and external character is requisite for the part I play. If you can afford to let your own nature be at ease, and show itself, it is only because your lie is not so perplexing as mine.

DROUK (*gives him his hand*).

That's right. We're both a lie. With this clear understanding, let us resume where we broke off. You were going to say, Sir Harry Vivid——

BALDWIN.

Yes—I suspect he hampers her with some old promise. (*Pauses.*) You don't know his person?

DROUK.

No.

BALDWIN.

So much the better. (*Half aside*) This is miserable work!

DROUK.

But what am I to do?

BALDWIN.

Patience! I linger on the threshold. The future lies before me like a sweet vision, agitated by tears and misgivings. One false step, and it is lost for ever.

DROUK.

Then make your step sure. Carry her off.

BALDWIN.

Drouk, you do not know me.

DROUK.

Don't I? Eugh!

BALDWIN.

I wasn't born for this toil of the spirits. I am unfit for the drag on the nerves,—the defeated hopes,—the baffled pride,—the wear and tear of body and mind by which I am consumed.

DROUK.

Pshaw! man, shake yourself and be happy. My own conviction is, that whatever is, is.—That's my motto. Never look back.

BALDWIN.

If we could concentrate ourselves in the present! But I cannot shut out the past—the bright prospects of youth—blighted I know not how. And now, what am I now?

DROUK.

Oh! you needn't be so hard upon yourself, after all. There are lords enough in our way of life to make it respectable.

BALDWIN.

Well—I told you that I met her at Brighton. I am prepared for your grim ridicule. She worked a miracle in my nature. I love her, not reasonably, not as other men love whose hearts are untouched by the bitterness of degradation, and who have no remorse to cloud or agonize their passion. I love her in utter despair, as the maniac tosses his arms towards the stars in the peaceful solitudes of heaven, and woos their calm and unattainable beauty!

DROUK.

Oh! no doubt.

BALDWIN.

The purity of my earliest feelings came back upon my heart

in her presence. My youthful ambition returned—my boy-dreams of a proud career!

DROUK.

Eugh! Come to the point. What's her fortune?

BALDWIN.

I forgot that.

DROUK.

No matter. You want my services in this business. You shall have them. What do you think they're worth?

BALDWIN.

Worth?

DROUK.

I'm not a grasping man.

BALDWIN.

Well—name your terms.

DROUK.

Suppose we say half the girl's fortune—if you get it. You see I am willing to take chance for what it may be. But it must be in writing, for I've a very indifferent memory—in money matters.

BALDWIN.

You put rather a high price upon your services, considering that all the expenses will fall to me.

DROUK.

Yes, but the girl will fall to you, too; I reckon her in as a heavy balance in your favour.

BALDWIN (*aside*).

This is truly the bridge to the Turk's Paradise! (*To* DROUK) You reduce the value of the prize below the risk. Say a fourth?

DROUK.

It's a bargain. I always name a high price at first, to leave room for a little generosity. Now then for business.

BALDWIN.

Sir Harry Vivid is the reputed admirer of Miss Temple. We must reduce him to such a situation, as to destroy all thoughts of an union between them.

DROUK.

Eugh! he is too much accustomed to a town life to be trapped by either of us.

BALDWIN.

You mistake me. I do not mean to ruin him by play. Our game is deeper and surer.

DROUK.

I should like to know what game that is.

BALDWIN.

You remember the simple girl, Clara?

DROUK.

The little tame thing that followed you to town last year?

BALDWIN.

Tush! that was mere slander. She has claims on me, and I am anxious to do her justice. It would give me great satisfaction to see poor Clara happy.

DROUK.

Hum!—well!

BALDWIN.

My plan is to bring Clara and Sir Harry together. Her beauty and artlessness are sure to captivate him.

DROUK.

Good!—a good plan. And you think, if the girl have words at will, she may become Lady Vivid?

BALDWIN.

I like Clara, and should be glad to see her so well settled.

DROUK (*aside*).

Or settled in any way, so she be taken off your hands.

BALDWIN.

Now Clara must live in a fashionable part of the town, and she will require the protection of some judicious friend (*looking significantly at* DROUK).

DROUK.

And you really think I look like a respectable guardian, rather advanced in life, with a cauliflower head, and waistcoat to match—a fellow that rises early, spells the newspapers, and pays his debts. Gammon! But I take your offer. Only let me live well, and I'll look as honest as I can.

BALDWIN.

Now, mark, to-morrow the Dowager Lady Pierrepoint opens a charity bazaar at her house. Sir Harry is one of the patrons, and is sure to be there. Happening to have a little interest with the old lady, whose literary vanity (for she is an authoress), renders her accessible to everybody who flatters her, I have secured a stall for Clara. She must do the rest.

DROUK.

But suppose she should fail?

BALDWIN.

I have provided against that. Sir Harry Vivid has not

long entered parliament. He has not yet taken any very conspicuous part, nor committed himself to either side of the house. He is like a vane in a calm, waiting for the first strong gust of wind, from whatever quarter it may blow, to take a decisive direction.

DROUK.

Well—

BALDWIN.

Well? Can you discover nothing in this from which we may derive profit.

DROUK.

Nothing—it's out of my line.

BALDWIN.

Listen. If we could only succeed in drawing him into some tumultuous public meeting, getting him to take the chair for instance (a species of distinction to which such men are peculiarly exposed) and so identify him with the clamorous discontented classes, it would facilitate my progress beyond all calculation.

DROUK.

How?

BALDWIN.

He would lose caste at once.

DROUK.

Not in this age. The time is gone by when public men were degraded by taking part with the humblest of their fellow-subjects.

BALDWIN.

Pshaw! I don't mean with the world. Let him reap all

the benefits of popularity. I speak only of Miss Temple. Associate him with the unsavoury masses—pledge him beyond redemption to the cause of the riotous mob—and he loses her for ever. There is an instinct in highbred women that leads them insensibly to sympathize with aristocracy and all its tinsel. They see only the poetical elements of the subject—the traditions of feudal glory—the chivalry—the romance of hereditary blood and time-honoured institutions. They thus become politicians without knowing it, and are confirmed in their faith by their natural horror of tumults and the disturbing principles that lead to them.

DROUK.

Your profound penetration takes away my breath. I never heard you talk in this way before.

BALDWIN.

You never saw my soul called into action before. Thought —power—all mental energy were buried in my dark life. But they were not dead—they only slept. Intellect and passion, hope and resolution are now reawakened:—but let us forget these things in the work that lies before us. Do you comprehend my plan?

DROUK.

Perfectly. It is deficient only in one particular.

BALDWIN.

What is that?

DROUK.

Your signature to the agreement.

BALDWIN.

I'll sign it at once.

DROUK.

Which done, I am your humble servant to the end of the transaction.

BALDWIN.

We play for a great stake, Drouk:—richer than the fabulous Orient!

DROUK.

Yes, but I risk nothing.

BALDWIN.

And I—all! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

SIR HARRY VIVID'S *Chambers in the Albany. Table covered with letters, papers, &c.* SIR HARRY *on a lounger.* SERVANT *enters with coffee.*

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Where's Burton?

SERVANT.

Gone to France, sir.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

And parliament to open in a week?

SERVANT.

He said he would take advantage of the recess, sir.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

And of me too, it appears. France! What is that large bundle of papers?

SERVANT (*reads*).

Petitions, sir.—Here's one from the inhabitants of Idleborough, praying to be exempted from serving in the militia: another from John Quincy, a debtor in the fleet, for a repeal of all laws affecting the liberty of the subject: a third—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

That will do. Let them lie on the table—the natural destiny of most grievances!

SERVANT.

A letter from the Patent Pump Company, requesting permission to put you into the direction next year.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Oh! certainly!—it keeps one before the public.

SERVANT.

Another from the Aged Vagrant Association, hoping you will promise them your support at their annual meeting.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Promise? Of course I will. Public men always *promise* their support. What cards have you there?

SERVANT.

Mr. Freelove,—Sir John Maple,—Lord Essence,—Count de Carvilliers,—Mr.—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Is there a card from Mr. Wortley?

SERVANT.

No, sir.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Take my carriage round in the afternoon, with the blinds down, and drop cards at these addresses. [*Exit* SERVANT.

Enter another SERVANT.

SERVANT.

A deputation from your constituents at Middleton Regis wait below, sir.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Plague on these constituencies! They think their representatives have nothing else to do but to attend to their business. (*To* SERVANT) Show my worthy friends into the next room. Get a substantial luncheon:—and, observe, the brown sherry. (*Exit* SERVANT.) That brown sherry would settle the most intricate question in a quarter of an hour.

Enter WYNDHAM.

Ha! Wyndham; how did you hear of my arrival?

WYNDHAM.

Last night at the club. I dropped in five minutes after you left.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Well, and what has been doing since I saw you? It seems an age.

WYNDHAM.

It is only a month.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

To me the longest I ever passed. Ah! there is no place like London after all.

WYNDHAM.

What? With the whole range of the liberal continent before you?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

My dear fellow, London is the central fire of the universe that feeds the whole with life. I am sick to death of Vienna and Paris. Dresden you trample out in a week—but you never can weary of London. It is always new, always fresh, always presenting unexpected combinations of human interest, character, and enjoyment—the metropolis of the Pleasures, as it is of the Intellect of the world!

WYNDHAM.

But the women abroad, Sir Harry?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Oh! women are much the same everywhere:—a degree plumper or thinner—a shade more or less intellectual or insipid—full of passion, or wilfulness—eyes of spleen or sunshine—lips as stern as a bow, or cleft by kisses—sanguine complexion, or icy cheeks—they all contrive to force their way by some means into the imagination, which is sure to create its own ideal out of the most unpromising materials.

WYNDHAM.

Yet there is a difference in climate.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Psha! Love makes its own climate. Do you think women love the more because the sky is blue, and the wind in the sweet south? Sir, they will love you in all weathers, and in all points of the compass, in spite of sun, moon, and stars. They were born to love: it is a necessity of their nature. You can't prevent them if you had a mind. Flatter them, they

idolize you: neglect them, inflamed with offended vanity, they follow you the more: treat them with sober seriousness, they think it a compliment to their understanding, and nothing can restrain them from sitting down to a regular siege.

WYNDHAM.

I'm afraid, Sir Harry, your successes have spoiled you. Are there not some women to be pursued like fawns, and as difficult to catch?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

A popular error, Wyndham; *we* make the chase, not *they*. If we were only to stand still, you would see them wheeling round and round in diminishing circles, until, weary of the ineffectual lure, they would drop exhausted into your hands. When a woman retreats, she means you to follow. Pursue her and she retreats still farther to heighten your excitement. Stop short, she looks back, wonders, and returns.

WYNDHAM.

Have a care. Don't be too confident, or you may lose the very quarry on which, unbeliever as you are, you set your heart. I have news for you.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I am in the very vein for news.

WYNDHAM.

Guess who's in town?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I can't guess.

WYNDHAM.

Adelaide Temple, your old flame.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

My old flame! Oh! Sir Harry, Sir Harry, that any

man should singe you with an old flame. Sir, I despise old flames. I burn for the whole sex. I love them all, from the bronzed pitcher-girl of the Ganges, to the luxurious Circassian with her luminous eyes. But Miss Temple, where has she been obscuring her radiant influence?

WYNDHAM.

At Brighton. Is it so long since you saw her?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I saw her last in the country at her guardian's, Mr. Wortley's—a pleasant pains-taking old gentleman, who labours hard to make you feel "at your ease," and is never comfortable until you are "quite at home" (*mimicking*).

WYNDHAM.

And how stood affairs between you and Adelaide then?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

If you persist in such disreputable insinuations, I will take an action for libel against you.

WYNDHAM.

And will no doubt recover sweeping damages; for you know it is a maxim of our law, that the greater the truth the greater the libel.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

The fact is, you are afraid of the cold plunge, and want some kind friend to encourage you by his example. When are you to be married, sober-sides? You have been at least seven years engaged to Fanny Belgrave. The girl is pining to death, and you have the cool assurance to come looking after my morals when you ought to be mending your own.

WYNDHAM.

Why, to tell you the truth—circumstances—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Circumstances!—the slough of despond. If you be for marrying, marry first—think of the circumstances afterwards.

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT.

The Honourable Cavendish Pause, sir.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Show him up. Yet stay—Wyndham, our friend Pause is said to be on a good understanding at Lady Belgraves'. Is that one of the circumstances?

WYNDHAM.

Pooh! nonsense.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Shall we have him up?

WYNDHAM.

Oh! by all means.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I am at home. (*Exit* SERVANT.) He is the best tempered pendulum extant, and lives in a state of perpetual oscillation. Here he is.

Enter The HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Pause, I am heartily glad to see you.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Sir Harry Vivid—Mr. Wyndham—your very obedient. I declare you look vastly well. You have actually got a colour, —such as it is.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I have just been bantering Wyndham on his looks. Don't you think he is falling into a sort of autumnal tint, as if he were—eh?—

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

He does, I confess, look a little sallow.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Now you—you are the happy medium; neither too young nor too old; but, having cast off the loose blossoms, are in the very fruit season of life.

WYNDHAM.

Mr. Pause is like the chemist's cucumber—all sunshine within.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Why, I am contented enough with things as they are; not but that I could wish them better. Yet, would you believe it? I have my own little cares—such as they are.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Then you are a miracle of philosophy to conceal them so effectually.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

That is very kind. But, do you know, I am not conscious of any philosophy. I am quite as subject to weakness as other people. For instance, I met Lord Spindle as I came here. He has just succeeded to his uncle's title; a thing nobody ever expected, for his uncle was a hale man, and very likely to get married; but he was taken off in a fit of apoplexy a few days ago. Lord Spindle looked so happy, and had such an air of luck and prosperity about him, that when

he shook me by the hand, I couldn't help a little rising of envy in my throat: he appeared so different a man from what I remember him ten days ago, when he was no more than plain Mr. Snipe. His long nose and spider legs will do great discredit to the peerage—such as it is.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

These are the accidents that bring hereditary titles into disrespect.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Men ought to be trained up to titles, Sir Harry, as you train vines to walls. But when people leap into the peerage, there is an end to its dignity. Think of the number of new creations of late: how many commoners sprung from money-bags have been elevated to the house of lords: really, if we go on at this rate, I know not where we shall look for pure nobility at last—such as it is.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Then the uneasiness of these *parvenues*, under the weight of their new honours, always betrays their origin.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Right, Sir Harry. Repose is the true characteristic of nobility. *We* are never flurried. The highest style of art in the aristocracy of England is still life.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Now *you* have had your eye on a coronet from your boyhood.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

My eye? My heart, Sir Harry. I have read for a coronet, eat and drank for a coronet, I have lived forty years a bachelor for a coronet, that I might make my wife Lady Ryedale.

WYNDHAM.

I hope, then, the report is not true that your brother, Lord Ryedale, is going to marry a young wife.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Lord Ryedale marry! I never heard of it.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

It is said that his sole object is to preserve the lineal descent.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Lineal humbug, gentlemen. If he marry, it is out of malice. He has the gout—meagrims in his head—can't move out of his chair—is subject to horrid dreams. Lineal descent? He knows that I have withstood temptations—such as they were—that I might preserve the honours of the house when he was gone.—Yet that he should marry, to entail his title on a dowager countess and a posthumous heir!

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Quite unlike a brother. As you postponed your intention of forming a matrimonial alliance so long, he should postpone his marriage, *sine die.*

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE (*laughing painfully*).

Ha! ha! ha! very good—such as it is.

WYNDHAM.

Then if you had happened to form a serious attachment—

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE (*walking up to Wyndham gravely*).

Sir, I *did* form a serious attachment—such as it was.

WYNDHAM and SIR HARRY VIVID.

You did?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

I did. I'm not insensible. The sex is not insensible. I did.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

But on the eve of a title and estates you are too cautious to commit yourself: a man of rank has so many considerations of family, fortune, and political connexions to consult.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE (*shaking hands with him*).

I believe you are my friend—and you, Mr. Wyndham—you are both my friends—such as you are. Sir Harry, you have expressed my sentiments with precision. Men of rank are responsible to their order. A commoner may marry anybody: but a peer must have his genealogical tree hung with noble fruit.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Very happy idea, Pause.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

He may certainly marry for convenience: many peers do.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

And that is hanging the tree with golden fruit. But who is the lady?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

There—there, I am impenetrable.

WYNDHAM.

Nonsense—you know we are your friends.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

You are my friends in the generals: you must excuse the particulars.—I have no friends in the particulars.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Well, shall we meet at the Athenæum at seven?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Not to-day.—I'll go directly to my Lord Ryedale.

WYNDHAM.

And I to Lady Belgrave's.—Will you go, Sir Harry?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

No!—I have a wilderness of letters to despatch. Mine is the Roman motto—first our country, next the gods or goddesses, if you please.

WYNDHAM.

What a happy constituency to have so zealous a representative!

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Constituency! 'Gad you remind me very opportunely. I have six of them waiting in the next room for me the whole morning. Thomas!—Good morning, Wyndham. Adieu, Pause. More gout to his lordship (*rings*). John, William, tell the gentlemen in the next room that I am now ready to wait on them. [*Exeunt different ways.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

MRS. DOUBTFUL'S. *Enter* ADELAIDE TEMPLE. SERVANT *in attendance.*

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Is your lady at home?

SERVANT.

I believe she is ma'am—don't know—can't say.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Believe she is—don't know—can't say! What do you mean by that?

SERVANT.

I mean, ma'am, that I—believe—I can't say.

[*Exit flurriedly.*

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

It's a strange house. The mistress seems as difficult to be got at as the lady in the lobster. I'll try again. (*Rings the bell. Enter another* SERVANT.) Where is your mistress?

SERVANT.

Ma'am!—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Is Mrs. Doubtful at home?

SERVANT.

Lord, ma'am—I can't tell.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Then who can tell?

SERVANT.

Why, master, ma'am. [*Exit abruptly.*

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I suspect "master" is both master and mistress. Well—I have not seen Mrs. Doubtful since her marriage, and if it be thus she has begun her honeymoon—single blessedness for me! So, I am referred to the master. I'll see what magic there is in his name (*rings*). Now, for another parley. It is really like entering a feudal castle a thousand years ago!

Enter MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Ah! my dear, dear Harriet, how d'ye do?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

My dear Adelaide, I am delighted to see you.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

But in no hurry to see me, nevertheless. Matrimony has odd effects upon some people's habits, and there's no saying what changes it may produce. How is Mr. ——? That question is so new to me, that I can hardly believe my own ears when I ask the lively, prattling, mischievous Harriet Cleveland how is her husband.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Pray do not banter, Adelaide—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Jesting apart, how was it brought about that so clever a creature as you should be tempted to marry her old guardian?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

He was always so very kind, and has been all his life so like a father to me, that——

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

You could not do less than make him your husband.

Nay, I see I have pained you, Harriet—tell me candidly, are you unhappy? [*They sit.*

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

What cause have I to make me unhappy? Mr. Doubtful has an independent fortune—I have a town house and a country house, a box at the Opera, a retinue, and more jewels than I shall ever wear. What more can a woman want?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! a great deal more.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

You judge by anticipation. What more would you require?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

My own way.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I have outlived that delusion, Adelaide. Before marriage a woman may procure some *éclat* by pretending to believe in the fiction of her ascendancy; but after marriage, the worshipped beauty becomes a very plain every-day sort of person, and the poetry of the sex's power is at an end for ever!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I protest you talk like an ill-used wife. Is Mr. Doubtful tyrannical? No? Is he jealous?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

No—not jealous—but peevish about trifles. He likes a quarrel for the foolish pleasure of the reconciliation:—he wishes me to be happy, but cannot bear me to be gay:—he hates everybody who is indifferent to me, but will not allow anybody to pay me the slightest attention:—after hurting my feelings by undeserved reproof, he atones for it by unme-

rited kindness, and thus overwhelms me alike by the extremes of cruelty and generosity.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

And can you not discover through this inconsistent behaviour the true source of the man's absurdities?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I sometimes think I do.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Ha! ha! ha! how you lose yourself in the labyrinth of cross-purposes. You cannot see the wood for the leaves; you are so taken up with each new vexation that you have not the power of penetrating to the original mischief; but as lookers on see more of the game than the players, I will tell you the cause of his fidgeting and wearying both your spirits and his own.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

You? Well, I should be glad to hear.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Thus then stands the case: Old Mr. Growl, long after he has passed the age when he could enjoy anybody's enjoyments but his own, marries Miss Simple; when Miss Simple becomes Mrs. Growl, she discovers that the old gentleman is peevish and fretful, and imagines that the only method of keeping him in good humour is to let him have his own way—accordingly she obeys him in all things, great and small, and at last ceases to have any will of her own; which Mr. Growl is ungenerous enough to take advantage of to her incessant mortification. But the fellow is really so fond of the lady, that, after he plays upon her amiable nature until he fills her heart with pangs, he offers her that sort of recompence which only covers the wound, but does not heal it.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

My dear Adelaide!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! it is true—you have spoiled him, but I hope not past recovery.

MR. DOUBTFUL (*outside*).

Where is your mistress?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

That's Mr. Doubtful's voice! Excuse me, I must leave you.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Well, to-day you shall be a slave, if you choose—but to-morrow, or next day, you must assert your independence. Come to see me, my dear, at Lady Belgrave's, and we'll talk it over. If he were ten times as *exigeant*, he must capitulate, when two women conspire. [*Exit.*

MR. DOUBTFUL (*outside*).

In the drawing-room?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Some new source of disquiet has started.

Enter MR. DOUBTFUL. *He looks at* MRS. DOUBTFUL *for a moment reproachfully, then retires up the stage, and throws himself into a chair. A pause.*

MRS. DOUBTFUL (*aside*).

What can be the matter? Perhaps he is not well. (*She goes over to him.*) Mr. Doubtful, how do you feel yourself this morning?

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Well, madam.—I *have* been ill, but I am recovering, and I hope soon to be restored to my health and my senses together.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Something has disturbed you.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

A mere trifle, madam (*rising*).

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

But every trifle that affects you, sir, is of interest to me.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

I believe it. We are always interested in that which pleases us.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

It surely does not please me that you should be displeased!

MR. DOUBTFUL.

It does not seem possible, madam, that any reasonable being could find a pleasure in displeasing; but we have so many illustrations of the paradox every day, that he must be a very rash sceptic indeed who would venture to doubt it.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Surely, I can explain—

MR. DOUBTFUL.

I extort no explanations, madam. I dare say I shall learn in time to be as frigid and careless as the rest of the world.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Indeed, I am ignorant—

MR. DOUBTFUL.

It is not that *you* are ignorant, madam, but that *I* am exorbitant.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Do not speak thus; but point out my error and I will avoid it.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

You choose your sentiments well, Mrs. Doubtful: I wish your practice would keep company with them.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

And so it shall, sir, if you will instruct me.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

'Sdeath, madam, you talk like an angel, and act like a ——. I could bear the tongue of a fury, the levity of a coquette, or the vanity of a fool; but I cannot bear open neglect. (*Aside*) I wish she would say something to make me quarrel with her.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Neglect?—

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Where have you been the whole morning, madam? I looked for you in the breakfast-parlour—the table was strewed over with evidence that you *had* been there: in the library —it was empty: and I find you here at last—entertaining company in my absence.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Oh! sir—

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Who are your visiters, madam?—who are they? I know nothing of them—I find my servants in confusion, and the apartments in disorder, with all the doors open, as if you were escaping from room to room to avoid me.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Avoid you, Mr. Doubtful?

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Yes, Mrs. Doubtful—avoid me. I thought you were never

to receive company except in my presence—I thought you were never to leave the breakfast-table till I had joined you—I thought I might always calculate on your society in the morning, however you might dispose of yourself for the rest of the day. But no, madam, you make your own hours, and choose your own friends, as if I were a nonentity.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I waited for you, sir, but you remained longer than usual——

MR. DOUBTFUL.

That is no excuse, madam—you were assured I would come at last—

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

But then a friend—

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Good—good—a friend—

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Indeed, I staid away as long as I could. I'm sure I wish you had been with me.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

What, madam, introduce *me* to your friend—make me a sort of blind—

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

This is the first time, Mr. Doubtful, since our union—which I fear is ill-starred, and teems with sorrow to us both—that you have ventured to insult me. I might have endured your temper, but when you wound my honour—

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Ti-tum-ti, madam; ti-tum-ti. Honour is now-a-days kept exclusively for the use of the stage. Ladies who breathe the upper air of *our* world have long since voted it a bore!

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I have been but one month a wife, and how have I spent my time?

MR. DOUBTFUL.

I do not complain of your conduct, Mrs. Doubtful, I believe your own inclinations are always in the right. (*Aside*)—What *do* I complain of?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

It is unkind to leave that doubt unfinished—

MR. DOUBTFUL (*walking up gravely to her*).

Who was that *friend* who visited you just now, madam?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

One whom you have often heard me speak of—

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Indeed!

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

A very dear friend—

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Humph!—His name, madam, his name—

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Miss Temple.

MR. DOUBTFUL (*turning away in confusion—aside*).

I've made an old fool of myself—I dare say she will laugh at me the moment I leave the room—(*turns round gradually and perceives her weeping*).—No—eh!—she is weeping—what a confounded thing it is to have one's head filled with idle love-crotchets at my time of life! Poor Harriet, I have certainly treated her very ill—(*approaches her*). Harriet, my love, I

confess I am in fault—it was only a foolish jest—I am too fond of you, you rogue—won't you forgive me, sweet—(*fondling*) diamonds would shine with double lustre in this beautiful dark hair—I will buy you a set this evening.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Indeed, sir, I have a profusion of ornaments—*that* which I would prize above gold you deny me.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

What is that, love?—What is that?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Your confidence.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

She's an exquisite creature—I'm a happy man—never was man so fortunate in wedlock—she's all affection and tenderness—all beauty and goodness—lips like rosebuds, eyes stolen from the spheres—she's an exquisite creature!

Enter SIR HARRY VIVID.

SIR HARRY.

Mrs. Doubtful, I kiss your hand. This is positively an adventure. Your servants are in such a state of confusion that I have been compelled at all risks to announce myself. (*With indifference*) Doubtful, how d'ye do?

MR. DOUBTFUL (*with assumed gaiety*).

Sir Harry, I am glad to see you.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Thank you; but to confess the truth, this visit is intended exclusively for your wife.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

I am sure, Sir Harry, my wife is much indebted to you for

your politeness—are you not, my dear? (*Aside to* MRS. DOUBTFUL) You had better go to the library, Harriet.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Nay, let the lady answer for herself (*goes over and take her hand*). I believe you are not yet out of your honeymoon—the white roses should still cluster in those tresses, that the world might recognise the signals of the bride—in the second month you retreat into shadow—in the third—(*he drops her hand and begins to reckon on his fingers: in the mean time* MR. DOUBTFUL, *who has been looking on with great uneasiness, leads her off, and takes her place at* SIR HARRY'S *side*)—fourth, fifth, sixth, you move through all the varieties of the prism towards that most interesting—(*takes* MR. DOUBTFUL'S *hand; they look at each other*)—What have you done with your wife? (MR. DOUBTFUL *points that she is gone.*)

SIR HARRY VIVID.

What! are you jealous already? Do you play jail tricks with your bird so soon? I'll come to-morrow, and the next day, and the day after that, and the day following, and the following day, and I'll have my revenge—I'll have my revenge—thou cruel January, that lockest up thy gentle May—thou monopolist—nay, never look angry.—I swear I'll have my revenge. [*Exit.*

MR. DOUBTFUL.

I'm the most miserable man in England! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

LADY BELGRAVE'S. *Enter* MR. WYNDHAM *and* FANNY BELGRAVE.

WYNDHAM.

Nay, I laugh at the visionary as well as you; but if the report be suffered to get abroad, that the Hon. Cavendish Pause is a suitor of Miss Belgrave's—

FANNY BELGRAVE.

How silly you make yourself, Mr. Wyndham!

WYNDHAM.

Silly?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

You speak as if I had the power of preventing people from talking.

WYNDHAM.

But it is in your power to show that the report is unfounded—

FANNY BELGRAVE.

How? By forbidding Mr. Pause the house! By shutting myself up? By anticipating the man's declaration? By—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*who had been observing at the back, comes down the stage in the centre*).

Marrying Wyndham off hand, and so setting the question at rest for ever. Why, what a couple of stupid creatures you are! There you stand looking at each other as solemnly as a pair of owls. (*They turn away.*) Well—not a word—(*she goes to* FANNY—*aside*) Mr. Pause is on the stairs—do tease Wyndham a little.—(*Goes to* WYNDHAM—*aside*) I don't want to make you jealous, but Mr. Pause is expected here today—

WYNDHAM.

Madam!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Hush! here he is, I declare—now, do look like a reasonable being—don't get into a temper—

Enter The HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Ladies, your very obedient.—Ah! Mr. Wyndham—always the true gallant—eh! ladies—such as he is!

WYNDHAM.

Pshaw!

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

By the way, Wyndham, that was all a false alarm about Lord Ryedale.—His lordship has got the croup—that's favourable, I believe, at his age.

WYNDHAM.

Very favourable—for you.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

He is horribly afflicted with gout, too. When I asked his medical mar. whether his lordship had any intention of getting married, he smiled jocularly, and said he supposed I meant buried. I hate such jokes.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Then there is really no hope of Lord Ryedale?

SIR CAVENDISH PAUSE.

None—none.—He was an excellent man:—too plain and retiring for a *peer*, but as a *man*, excellent—he had but one fault—such as it was—

WYNDHAM.

What was that?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

You must not ask me.

WYNDHAM.

I'll tell you—a provokingly stubborn constitution.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

And so the spell is about to be broken that has kept the Hon. Mr. Pause so long hovering round a title.

WYNDHAM.

And a wife.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

You alarm me, Miss Temple. Should I marry—I say *should* I marry—

WYNDHAM.

Well?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Well? I say *should* I—it is one of those questions that must be decided by degrees.

WYNDHAM.

Then, while you are deciding it, I must take my leave; pray, ladies, don't hurry Mr. Pause. Be assured he will come to a conclusion, one way or the other,—in the course of time. [*Exit.*

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

And I, too, must run away, for I have a hundred things to do this morning. Fanny, you'll entertain Mr. Pause. (*Aside*) You deserve this, my fair cousin, for your treatment of poor Wyndham. [*Exit.*

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Cousin—Adelaide—she's always doing mischief (*mutual embarrassment*).

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Very extraordinary—leaving me alone with Miss Belgrave —it's very pointed. (*To her*) I hope—

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Oh! dear no—

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE (*aside*).

She's evidently confused—so am I.

FANNY BELGRAVE (*coughs*).

Hem!

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE (*starts so abruptly as to make Fanny start also*).

Bless me! I beg your pardon. Oh! the girl's evidently gone (*turns and finds that she has retired*). By Jove, she *is* gone—well, there is nothing like decision, after all—such as it is. There are some people who cannot make up their minds, and are always catching at straws to keep themselves miserable. Now, I think I have made up my mind—I *think* I have. Marriage is a serious undertaking. You must submit to family congratulations on certain events, and have a nursery at the top of the house. One doesn't know what a nursery may lead to. A pretty nurse is a very equivocal person in a house. Then, as the children increase, one must adopt a system, as if one lived like a mechanic by the chimes of the parish church. I don't think I've made up my mind. Temper, too, is a consideration—such as it is—Miss Belgrave is very amiable in public—I should like a little preliminary experience of her in private. There are great doubts in the case. A single man in the aristocracy is like a white crow—he does not mix up with his order—he cannot send his title in a right line down to posterity. That is a profound argument. I think I ought to marry. I'm *sure* I think so.

[LUCY *passes at the back.*

Hem !—My dear—a word with you.

LUCY.

Sir ?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

How do you do, my dear ?

LUCY.

Very well, sir, thank you.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Are you Miss Belgrave's maid, my dear ?

LUCY.

Yes, sir.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

And what is your name ?

LUCY.

Lucy, sir, at your service.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Lucy, at my service. (*Aside*) This is the very thing. This abigail knows her mistress's humours better than her mistress, and if there be bad-temper in the way has come in for it in full—such as it is—I'll put a few leading questions. Lucy, my dear, I want to ask you something.

LUCY.

If you please, sir.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

How long have you lived in this house ?

LUCY.

Oh ! a very long time, sir.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

What do you call a very long time, Lucy?

LUCY.

Stay—next Thursday—29th—it will be three quarters. Isn't that a very long time to be own maid to a young lady, sir?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Why, my dear?

LUCY.

Because, sir, young ladies are so fanciful and cross, that servants won't put up with them. And they change their minds so often and fidget one about their lovers and such like, that it is no easy matter to keep more than a month together with most of them.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Then I suppose Miss Belgrave is an exception, you and she agree pretty well together, Lucy?

LUCY.

Tolerable, sir.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

But she must be very amiable as you have lived so very long with her.

LUCY.

Why there are worse in the world; but if some mistresses put on airs, sir, there are some maids that look it over.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Oh! I see: then it is not owing to Miss Belgrave's amiability altogether, but to your good temper, Lucy—such as it is—you have lived so long here?

LUCY.

I don't know about my good temper, sir—it isn't for a

girl like me to talk about temper, when my betters are not so particular about theirs. But I think if all the young ladies were as sweet-dispositioned as some of their maids, it wouldn't hurt their preferment.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

But Miss Belgrave is very kind to you?

LUCY.

I don't know for the matter of that, sir, she lets me have her dresses, to be sure; but lord, sir, it's nothing to the places some of us have. Lady Catherine Furbelow never wears a dress more than once; and Lady Sarah Scamper allows her own maid to wear her jewels when she goes out to a party. Lord, sir, there's nothing like your Lady this, and your Lady that, for grandeur and elegance. Your plain Miss What-d'ye-call-'em is nobody.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE (*aside*).

The minx!—she has touched the very chord. I have *not* made up my mind. (*To her*) There, Lucy, buy yourself a ribbon, child (*gives her money*).

LUCY (*looking at the money*).

Tape, one would suppose he meant, by the look of the coin.

[*Exit.*

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Decision?—I'll never decide.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Large room at LADY PIERREPOINT'S.—*Sofa tables running down each side, covered with a variety of fancy articles, and divided fantastically into stalls. Ottomans, &c. scattered about, and numerous baskets, cages, reticules, &c. hung upon the walls. Three low windows at the back open upon the grounds, which are ornamentally laid out with shrubs, marquees, &c. Groups of people promenading behind.*

Enter LADY PIERREPOINT *and* LADY BLAIZE *from the side.*

LADY PIERREPOINT.

My dear Lady Blaize, isn't this charming? See what varieties we have conjured up in this little paradise of philanthropy! It is so poetical and *recherché*—to bring all one's friends together in the daylight, and do good at the same time.

LADY BLAIZE.

Delicious—quite delicious that doing good. Are these screens the work of your ladyship's fair hands?

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Why, one is obliged to say so, or we should never produce a sensation. The poor wretch who made them got a mere trifle for them: as mine, you know, they will bring high prices.

LADY BLAIZE.

All for the benefit of the charity.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

One's benevolence really obliges one sometimes to traffic on one's popularity.

LADY BLAIZE.

Occasionally even at the expense of one's veracity.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Yes—but charity hides a multitude of faults.

LADY BLAIZE.

That's a delicious truth—quite delicious. (*Aside*) Trumpery old fool!

Enter LADY MATCHMAKER, MRS. GRANT, *and* MISS CASTOFF.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

My dear Lady Matchmaker, how very kind of you to be so punctual. And Mrs. Grant—and my dear Miss Castoff. Really the poor don't know what good friends we are to them. Well, I declare that bonnet is quite a picture! (*Aside*) She's a perfect fright.

LADY BLAIZE.

Delicious—quite delicious.

LADY MATCHMAKER.

Oh!—(*simpers*)—But look at Miss Castoff's scarf. Isn't it a beauty?

LADY BLAIZE.

Delicious—quite delicious.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

The colour is superb. How felicitously it throws out the elegiac expression of her eyes!

MISS CASTOFF.

You will make me vain. (*Aside*) Envious wretches!

MRS. GRANT.

Have you seen Grub's journal, this morning? No? (LADY PIERREPOINT *looks a little embarrassed*). All about your ladyship, too.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Oh!—I had a presentiment. There is nothing I have such a horror of as seeing my name in print.

LADY BLAIZE (*aside*).

And half the scandalous papers in town are in her ladyship's pay.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

My dear Mrs. Grant, pray spare me. (*In a half-averted tone*) What could they have to say about me?

MRS. GRANT.

Only a criticism on your ladyship's last novel.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Oh, these shocking critics! They will not allow one to employ one's leisure in elegant literature, without dragging one constantly before the public.

MRS. GRANT.

But it is so complimentary that one might almost suppose you were acquainted with the editor.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Oh! dear no. Whatever they say about my poor talents is perfectly independent of personal interest.

LADY BLAIZE (*aside*).

To my knowledge Mr. Grub dined with her yesterday.

MRS. GRANT.

Here it is (*drawing the paper from her pocket*).

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Oh! let me supplicate you—don't read it—consider the

sensibilities of an author. I wonder what they could have to say complimentary of me.

LADY MATCHMAKER.

Oh! read it by all means.

MRS. GRANT.

Your ladyship will excuse the curiosity of your friends.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

It is very flattering—but an author's feelings—go on!

[*They draw chairs and sit.*

MRS. GRANT (*reads*).

"The Disinherited Heiress; or, The Cross of St. John. A Novel in 3 vols. By Lady Pierrepoint, author of 'The Sphinx,' 'The Nightmare,' and other Poems. The subject chosen by this accomplished and unrivalled writer is a melancholy story of intrigue in high life. The public, therefore, may be congratulated at last upon a picture of the aristocracy drawn for the first time by one of themselves."

LADY BLAIZE.

Delicious—quite delicious! (*Aside*) A contemptible puff!

MISS CASTOFF.

How very charming! (*Aside*) What a gross creature she is!

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Pray spare me.

MRS. GRANT (*reads*).

"The character of Clorinda, the disinterested heiress—"

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Disinterested? Disinherited!

MRS. GRANT.

No—disinterested—see—it's quite plain.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

What a horrid mistake! It will ruin me—go on—go on.

MRS. GRANT.

"The disinterested heiress is perfectly new; and the episode of the highway robbery is eminently dramatic. But the great mystery is, who is the Duke of Felt? We suspect we could name the living original of that extraordinary character, but for the present must maintain a respectful silence. In the mean time, however, we may observe that it is not impossible the enigma may be solved to-day, when her ladyship holds a charity bazaar at her house, with her usual disinherited generosity."

(*During the reading of this passage the coterie exhibit signs of uneasiness and aversion.*)

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Disinherited? Disinterested, my dear.

MRS. GRANT.

Positively it is disinherited.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

How *could* such a terrible blunder have happened?

MRS. GRANT.

Oh! everybody will see it is a mistake. The article places your ladyship amongst the most popular authors of the day.

LADY BLAIZE.

Delicious—quite delicious.

MISS CASTOFF.

A gem of criticism.

LADY MATCHMAKER.

So elegant and profound.

LADY PIERREPOINT (*aside*).

I wrote it all myself. This is true fame!

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT.

Mr. Grub, your ladyship.

LADY BLAIZE.

Mr. Grub!

LADY MATCHMAKER.

Mr. Grub!

MISS CASTOFF.

Mr. Grub! I thought your ladyship didn't know Mr. Grub?

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Why, ladies, to tell you the truth, I am not exactly acquainted with him; but one's notoriety, you know—

Enter MR. GRUB.

GRUB.

Lady Pierrepoint, your most obedient. What a delightful evening you gave us last night.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Oh! pray, Mr. Grub—

GRUB.

I could not be happy till I called to pay my respects this morning; especially to explain a confounded mistake the printers made in that piquant criticism on your new novel which your ladyship was kind enough to——

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Mr. Grub—you make me blush—really — I — I — Now,

ladies, the visiters are pouring in—pray take your places—there, there—(*aside to* GRUB) how could you be so indiscreet before so many strangers!

LADY BLAIZE (*aside, going up*).

Her ladyship doesn't like to see her name in print! Oh! the fraudulent old—

LADY MATCHMAKER (*aside, going up*).

So—that's the way she gets her reputation.

MISS CASTOFF (*aside, going up*).

To write a panegyric on her own book! I wish *I* could write!

[*During the above, company are arriving singly and in groups, amongst the rest,* SIR HYACINTH SHARP *and* MR. SHADOW; *the ladies take their places at the stalls, and* LADY PIERREPOINT *occupies a prominent position receiving her friends—music at the back playing at intervals throughout the scene.* SIR HARRY VIVID *in the midst of a group—*BALDWIN *at a distance observing him.* CLARA *enters from the back; a servant in livery shows her to a stall near the front on the left side.*

GRUB (*running forward*).

This would be a famous opportunity for placarding my Journal (*takes a large printed bill out of his pocket*). Capital advertisement that—the number is sure of a great sale at this exciting moment. Good—"Grub's Journal"—mum!—"The largest circulation"—"Mirror of fashionable life"—"Analysis of the new Novel, by Frances, Lady Pierrepoint"—Good again! There's no exaggeration in that, for it is *by* her ladyship,—novel, analysis, and all. Now, for some benevolent lady to hang out my banner.

[*Looks at various stalls and stops before* CLARA. *He examines some articles and appears to enter into conversation with her.*

SIR HARRY VIVID (*at the opposite side*).

What a charming face! fraught with grace and sentiment, and looking as if it had just moved out of the canvass of Kneller. (*To* LADY PIERREPOINT, *who is passing*) Can your ladyship inform me who that divinity is—the lady with the wreath of flowers in her hand?

LADY PIERREPOINT.

That *is* strange. I really don't know. On these occasions, when one opens one's heart you know, Sir Harry, one must open one's door to everybody. But it is such a pleasant thing to do good! Have you seen my new novel?

SIR HARRY VIVID (*gazing at* CLARA).

Full of natural refinement and simple beauty.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

You are always so obliging. And what do you say to my heroine, Clorinda?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

She is perfect—a poet might dream of such a head. I would give the world to hear her speak.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

To hear my Clorinda speak. Well, she must have made an impression to produce such an odd wish. Don't you remember I described her voice like a flageolet melting in a wood—

BALDWIN (*interposes*).

Pardon me, madam, for interrupting you. There are some ladies at the upper end of the room who have lost their places through some confusion.—Perhaps you would—

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Oh! certainly, by all means.

[BALDWIN *draws her up the stage.*

GRUB (*hanging up the placard*).

Greatly obliged—a new feature—positively it has quite an effect. You see how attractive it is.

[*A crowd gradually draw round the stall.*

LADY MATCHMAKER.

What can they be all gathering there for, my dear?

MISS CASTOFF.

Some nonsense, you may be sure. *I* have had no crowd about *me*.

MRS. GRANT.

I protest it's an account of Grub's Journal, with the criticism on the novel.

LADY BLAIZE.

Oh! the shocking egotism of that antiquated blue.

LADY MATCHMAKER.

Let us see what it is all about. [*The several ladies leave their stalls and gather in front of* CLARA.

FIRST LADY.

Is the novel for sale?

SIR HYACINTH SHARP.

No, madam,—but the criticism is.

LADY PIERREPOINT (*to* GRUB).

Mr. Grub, how can you make one look so ridiculous!

GRUB.

Madam, you must pay the penalty of fame. They are only lionizing your ladyship.

[*The confusion increases, and in the midst of it Clara leaves her stall, and crossing in front drops her glove.*

CLARA.

What a Babel of tongues! I am half sorry I came here How shall I make my escape. All eyes are upon me.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*picks up the glove, and follows her*).

Permit me, madam—(*hands her the glove*).

CLARA.

Thank you, sir (*with confusion*).

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I am afraid the heat of the room has overcome you.

CLARA.

Thank you—I must retire—which way—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Allow me the honour of seeing you to your carriage.

[*They retire up the stage; the remaining characters close in front.*

GRUB (*aside to* LADY PIERREPOINT).

Your ladyship must not mind all this clamorous curiosity. It will make the book sell like wildfire.

MR. SHADOW.

Is the story founded on real life?

SIR HYACINTH SHARP.

I think not—I believe it is laid in Italy.

LADY BLAIZE.

It is a melancholy intrigue in high life.

MRS. GRANT.

There is an eminently dramatic episode of a highway robbery.

MISS CASTOFF.

But the grand mystery is the Duke of Felt.

LADY MATCHMAKER.

His Grace was to have been solved to day. If there be a Duke present (*looking at* BALDWIN), I hope he will declare himself.

BALDWIN.

I am conscious, madam, of the flattering surmise—but I am not the Duke of Felt. Ladies, you put the book to a severe test. The noblest part of criticism is the discovery of merits —the meanest the detection of faults. No work, however excellent, is invulnerable to drawing-room ridicule.

GRUB (*aside to* LADY PIERREPOINT).

Ask them to dinner.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

I am proud that my poor volumes, if not witty in themselves, should be the cause, as Shakspeare says, of so much wit in others. Will you give me the pleasure of your company to dinner?—without parade, you know, in my plain way.

LADY MATCHMAKER.

Oh! with the greatest pleasure in the world. She's an uncommonly brilliant woman.

MISS CASTOFF.

A wit, and so sweet-tempered.

MRS. GRANT.

And how excessively clever the novel is!

LADY BLAIZE.

Without the least flattery, delicious—quite delicious!

BALDWIN (*aside*).

There is nothing stifles criticism like a dinner!

(*Characters form.*)

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Apartment richly furnished in St. James's Street. DROUK *and* CLARA *discovered.*

DROUK.

And so he walked home with you from the bazaar?

CLARA.

Yes, sir.

DROUK.

Well—come,—what did he say to you?

CLARA.

Oh! a thousand things.

DROUK.

To be sure he did. He saw you were fresh from the country. There's nothing your liquorish young rascals follow with such perseverance as a pretty face that looks as if it never were in town before. Well, and when he asked leave to visit you this morning?

CLARA.

I said I should inform you.

DROUK.

Capital! (*Aside*) Eugh! she wants no instructions from me. She has it all by nature. How marvellous handsome she looks! Now, if I weren't a man of honour, I'd balk Sir Harry myself. But I'm above temptations. (*To her*) And what hour do you expect him?

CLARA.

Immediately, sir; he said two o'clock.

DROUK (*taking out his watch*).

Never fear, he'll keep his word. It's one of the few appointments a gentleman always keeps.—(*Knocking at the street-door.*) To the second. There he is—now run to the piano—

CLARA.

What shall I play?

DROUK.

Any thing—Rule Britannia!

Enter a SERVANT, *who hands a card to* CLARA.

CLARA.

He is below, sir.

DROUK.

Show the gentleman up. (*Exit* SERVANT.)—Now you must put your best foot foremost. Dress up a bit, and look bashful. Well, what a natural-looking thing you *can be*, Miss Clary, when you like! (*Takes up a newspaper, which he reads through an eye-glass.*)

Enter SIR HARRY VIVID. CLARA *rises timidly from the piano*—SIR HARRY VIVID *bows*—DROUK *awkwardly and ceremoniously returns his salute.*

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I have done myself the honour—

CLARA.

Mr. Irwin—Sir Harry Vivid.

DROUK.

Sir Harry, I'm very happy to make your acquaintance. I'm

a plain fellow, so don't expect any airs or graces from me. There's my hand—how d'ye do, Sir Harry ?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Sir, I am much gratified by this warm reception. (*Aside*)—Strange, blunt old gentleman this.

DROUK.

You see, Sir Harry, I am a man of the world. I say what I mean, and mean what I say. My daughter and I are both glad to see you. I hope we'll all know each other better by and by. And so, Sir Harry, you *would* walk home with my daughter from the bazaar yesterday. To be sure it was only a step from the park.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Why, sir, I certainly ought to apologize—

DROUK.

Don't apologize at all—young people must do queer things. I did queer things when I was young myself. But you see Clary has been brought up in the country, and you and I know very well that sometimes—(*makes a significant motion*)—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Really, my dear sir—

DROUK.

Don't apologize, Sir Harry, my daughter is a good girl, a very good girl. She is my own chick—she never had a mother to look after her—she takes after me in every thing—don't you think there's a wonderful resemblance between us, Sir Harry ? But she's so grown, she's very womanly of her age. And she's better than she looks.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Sir——I——

DROUK.

Hem! (*significantly.*) But, as I said before, although she's in no way skittish, she's fond of the sights, and I'm so taken up with my lawsuits here in town that I have not much time—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

But ladies constantly go out alone in their carriages—

DROUK.

Oh! very true, Sir Harry—of course: but as my stay in my present situation is by no means certain, for it depends entirely on circumstances, I didn't like to encumber myself with my carriage. Clary begged hard that I would bring my brown britska to town, and my long-tailed horses, and her Arabian pony, and my black boy to ride behind; but I couldn't think of such a piece of extravagance for a week or two. Eh! Clary?

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

Brown britska, long-tailed horses, Arabian pony, and black boy to ride behind! Some commoner of substance, no doubt, who has risen from honest trade. (*To him*) Pray, sir, may I ask in what part of the country your estate lies?

DROUK.

In what part? Oh! you mean—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

In what county?

DROUK.

Exactly. Now you will think it very odd, Sir Harry; I know you'll think it very odd—but I have an invincible prejudice against landed property. I never bought a rood of land in my life—never.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

That is, you have an objection to sink your money?

DROUK.

Precisely so. I like a floating capital—passing from one hand to another, and accumulating like a snowball. I have a speculative turn: the worse luck now, the better another time.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Oh! I perceive. You dabble in the funds.

DROUK.

That's my foible, Sir Harry. I like to have my money loose, so that I can bet in or out, as the fancy takes me. Indeed, so much so, that I sometimes carry all I'm worth in the world in my greatcoat pocket.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

What a whimsical old gentleman! But no doubt as rich as a nabob.

DROUK.

But all this time my lawyer is waiting for me in the next room. These lawyers are sad dogs, Sir Harry. We can neither live with them nor without them, as the song says. My last bill of costs was seventeen hundred and fifty pounds odd, and I'm sure I'm farther from the mark now than I was then. Will you excuse me? Clary will amuse you while I'm away. (*Aside*) I think he's regularly floundered! [*Exit.*

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

The most extraordinary specimen of country plain-dealing I ever fell in with. How unlike his daughter! What an air of delicacy and tenderness!—Nature certainly commits strange freaks now and then. (*To her*) Is this your first visit to London, Miss Irwin.

CLARA.

Yes, sir.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I envy you the flutter of the novelty—the streets—the crowds.

CLARA.

Yet I never felt so lonely. There is no solitude so intense as that of a crowded city.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Perhaps you don't go out?

CLARA.

Very rarely.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I see how it is. The old gentleman attends to his own business, and leaves you to pine in these great rooms alone, looking at the clouds sailing above, or the cold faces moving past below: (*falls unconsciously into a grave tone*) is it not so? Is your father—the old gentleman—does he live wholly in the country?

CLARA.

Not always.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

He has lawsuits?

CLARA.

I have heard him say so.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

And you have no protector but him? The ties of Nature are strong, but so are her impulses. You'll never return to the country.

CLARA.

Oh! yes, I like retirement.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I can detect the sophistry in your eyes. Your beauty was not intended for solitude. It would be heresy to think so.

CLARA.

Beauty is the poorest quality upon which a woman can be complimented.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

But the first that draws all eyes upon her. I saw your beauty before I heard your voice, or could have guessed your merits.

CLARA.

Is that the language of the world, Sir Harry, for which you would charm me out of my solitude?

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

Her wit is as swift as an arrow. (*To her*) Do you expect the old gentleman back shortly?

CLARA.

Shall I send for him?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Not for the world. By the way, have you been at the opera?

CLARA.

Never!

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Then allow me to offer you my box.

CLARA.

You are very polite, but—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

You think there ought to be more formality in these matters? You ladies would make us gentlemen more trustworthy if you would place more confidence in us.

CLARA.

Confidence at first sight, Sir Harry?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Why, not exactly at first sight—except in some cases.

CLARA.

Of course your own is one of the exceptions?

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

She is the very genius of repartee! (*To her*) No—no—but, really, if you withhold your confidence, you turn us into conspirators. Give us credit for honour, and you make us honourable. (*Aside*) I think that will do.

CLARA.

Honour! I never doubted Sir Harry Vivid's honour. I never meant to test it.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

What absurdity have I been committing! (*To her*) Miss Irwin, you must not put such an exact value on words:—the truth is, we get into the most wretched artificial habits in a town-life—the whole structure of our society, from the foundation to the roof, is made up of hollow conventions—the language we speak is a sort of freemasonry, intelligible only to ourselves—honour and beauty, and a thousand other fine words creep into it, and become convertible terms, without an atom of meaning in them, for the use of every idle sentence we utter. I frankly confess this—but you must not imagine that

none of us ever speak with sincerity. You may implicitly believe *me*.

CLARA.

Suppose I did, what would you think of my discretion?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

That it was most wisely exercised. What else should I think?

CLARA.

That, by the same rule, I should implicitly believe every gentleman who, in a single interview, held the same language.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

She's a female enigma!—wit—beauty—penetration! (*To her, dropping into seriousness*) I do not ask your confidence—I will deserve it.

CLARA (*slightly agitated*).

I did not mean that—it was mere *badinage*.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Will you permit me to wait on you to-morrow?

CLARA.

We shall be proud of the honour; but you must have so many better engagements.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

If I had fifty—(*she looks reproachfully at him*)—I do not say I would break them—but I would endeavour to postpone them for the happiness of waiting on you. (*Aside*) She is an angel!—This adventure is likely to be more in earnest than my thoughtless head dreamt of. (*To her*) You will accept the box at the Opera?—(CLARA *retires to the side, taking leave in silence*—SIR HARRY *bows at the opposite side, and speaks aside*)

—Charming, fascinating Clara! I will dine alone to-day, to spend the whole evening thinking of her. [*Exit.*

CLARA.

And this is he whom I am to deceive! My heart sickens at the thought. *My* heart? Wretched, lost Clara! thy heart is dead. Where I had placed my love in silence and in the confiding hope of youth, I found despair. But am I so lost that I must act this treachery? No—no—no.—What if I win his affections. *His* affections—he who moves in the world's admiration, honoured, and honourable—frank—noble—generous. My fortune must indeed be miserable, if to build it up I must sacrifice him. Is it so miserable? Why should it be? MY LIFE IS SPOTLESS—My hands are weak, but they can work—Oh! give me strength to outlive this struggle. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

LADY BELGRAVE'S.—*Enter* MRS. DOUBTFUL *and* ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Such a tempest of passion! I'm sure he'll send a message to Sir Harry.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I wish he would.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Don't talk so!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Nonsense!

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I've thought of a plan. Would you speak to Sir Harry?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I?—Speak to Sir Harry?—I would do any thing, my dear Harriet, in reason, to oblige you; but speak to Sir Harry?—No—not that! I've thought of a much better way, and here comes the very best person in the world to execute it—

Enter WORTLEY *and* BALDWIN.

Good, sedate Mr. Baldwin (*going up to him and putting out both hands cordially*), very glad to see you in London.

[BALDWIN *bows formally.*

WORTLEY.

I told you she'd be glad to see you. He wanted to pay a formal visit to-morrow, but I carried him with me *nolens volens.* I hate formality.

BALDWIN.

Miss Temple, sir, needs no enforcement to draw all hearts to her feet.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I call witnesses—that is the first compliment Mr. Baldwin ever paid me. (BALDWIN *relapses into seriousness.*) Now, don't get grave, and spoil that very pretty speech. (*To* WORTLEY)—Don't you remember this face, sir? Mrs. Doubtful, whom you knew as Miss Cleveland.

WORTLEY.

Cleveland?—Harriet Cleveland?—Here's a pretty piece of business! Why, child, you are hardly out of your teens yet.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Out of her honeymoon, you mean. She has been married a whole month.

WORTLEY.

A month married! I dare swear, now, he's some fine, dashing, gay, young fellow. I'll venture to wager there's not a prettier young couple in London.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

There now, you must entertain her in the next room for five minutes. I have something to say to Mr. Baldwin. You shall be in the secret, by-and-by: so go away. (*To* MRS. DOUBTFUL *as they are going*) You mustn't be alarmed—leave everything to me.

[*exunt* WORTLEY *and* MRS. DOUBTFUL.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Now, Mr. Baldwin, I have a great favour to ask of you.

BALDWIN.

Rather to confer, Miss Temple.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I fancy I can say anything to you. I am sure I can rely upon you.

BALDWIN.

Implicitly, madam. (*Aside*) What can this lead to?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

My charming friend, Mrs. Doubtful, is married to an old, captious husband, who, in a fit of jealousy, has quarrelled with a scatter-brained gentleman, Sir Harry Vivid. She's horribly frightened—thinks her husband is going to send Sir Harry a message—so I promised to ask you to interfere.

BALDWIN.

Is that all?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

All?—A duel.

BALDWIN.

Your apprehensions exaggerate the danger; but I'll undertake to prevent the meeting—if possible. (*Pauses thought-*

fully.) I'm sorry Sir Harry Vivid is the hero of this unfortunate story.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Then you know something of him?

BALDWIN.

Only by common report; and, after all, he may be grossly slandered.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Sir Harry is frivolous, perhaps, but not wanting in principle, should a mature time call it into action. At least I hope so,—for poor Mrs. Doubtful's sake.

BALDWIN.

How generously, how nobly you interpret character in the depths of its conflicting elements! A man so capable of achieving distinction, so endowed with brilliant powers, *ought* to rise one day superior to all temptations.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Ought, but never will—that is what you mean?

BALDWIN.

I have not said so.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

You have not *said* so—but you think it. Do speak frankly.

BALDWIN.

How can I analyze idle rumours? How can I separate the infinite atoms of small facts and suggestions that make up the sum of daily scandal?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Has Sir Harry committted any dishonourable acts?

BALDWIN.

I never understood so.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Does he play?

BALDWIN.

You would regard that, perhaps, as the worst of all?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Certainly, as the last stage of degradation.

BALDWIN.

Yet you said just now, that when the time came principle would vindicate itself in action. It was kindly and wisely said.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Yes; but there is no hope for the gambler.

BALDWIN.

That is a harsh sentence! Virtue does violence to her divine mission when she closes the door of hope upon the basest culprit. The world says there is no hope for the gambler, and *makes* the criminal it refuses to save. But there *is* hope even for him, the pariah, who, standing alone, shorn of all ties and sympathies, yet cherishes in his heart one holy sanctuary which he has kept free from defilement, where he has garnered up his solitary affections, waiting for a responding grace to give strength to his resolves, to purify and redeem him. You know not how many deaths are in the word: how many struggles of returning pride—how many reviving energies for good—how many prayers and aspirations after a compensating future, are killed in that one word. Oh! not hopeless!—not hopeless!—(*deeply agitated*).

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I spoke hastily.

BALDWIN.

Should such a one—so committed to an absorbing vice—feel the sweet peace of earlier hours come back upon him, and, like a refreshing dew, sink into his heart—should such a one, so regenerated by some gracious influence informing him of what he *is*, and inspiring him with glorious visions of what he might *become*—should he cast himself before you, and say that *you* had wrought that wondrous revolution in his life, and upon *you* depended the completion of the miracle—would you answer him that there was *no hope?*

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Upon my word that *is* a practical way of putting a lady to the test of her opinions: I declare—ha!—ha!—one would almost think you were pleading for such an outcast as you describe.

BALDWIN.

And so I am—(*Enter* MR. WORTLEY *and* MRS. DOUBTFUL.)—for all whom the hard world would rob of hope.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Remember, we depend on your promise. Allow me to present Mr. Baldwin—Mrs. Doubtful. (*Aside to the latter*) You must be very civil to him—he will settle everything.

[BALDWIN *and* MRS. DOUBTFUL *take chairs apart.*

WORTLEY.

It is amazing how girls do spring up into women. I haven't recovered my surprise yet. Why it was only the other day, she wasn't as tall as my walking-stick. Mrs. Doubtful! I should have as soon expected to have found her playing her hoop.

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT (*to* ADELAIDE TEMPLE).

A gentleman below, madam, wishes to see you.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

To see me? (*looks at* WORTLEY.) Desire him to walk up.

BALDWIN (*to* MRS. DOUBTFUL).

Be assured, madam, your fears magnify the danger—be more composed (*takes her hand*).

Enter MR. DOUBTFUL.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Miss Temple, I presume. (*Sees* MRS. DOUBTFUL.) My wife, and a man! I'm a happy dog.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*coming forward*).

You look surprised, sir. These are particular friends of mine, who are engaged on very pressing, private business.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Pressing private business! (*Aside*) So, my wife has very pressing private business with a man I never saw before in my life! (*To* ADELAIDE) I see, madam, it is very pressing, if I may judge from the manner the gentleman squeezes the lady's hand. Your pardon, madam (*passes over to* MRS. DOUBTFUL, *who now for the first time perceives him*). Do not let me interrupt so interesting a *tête-à-tête*. Your business I hear is very pressing and private.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Mr. Doubtful!

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Yes, madam; Mr. Doubtful. Have you the courage to look me in the face?—And you, sir—who are you, sir?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*interposing*).

A friend of mine, sir. Had I been aware that I was addressing Mr. Doubtful, I should have spoken with less reserve; but he will at once perceive that I mistook him for a stranger.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

You are perfectly right, madam. I *am* a stranger. I happen to be that lady's husband—a circumstance that makes me strange even to myself.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Mr. Doubtful—

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Well, madam. This hesitation becomes you. You leave home suddenly—I learn, by accident, that you are gone out to visit—but where, not one of your servants can inform me. I come to the house of a lady with whom, by accident, I discover you are intimate—and I find you here, madam, in close conversation with a stranger, by accident too, I suppose, while your friend is ready with excuses to cover your delinquency.

BALDWIN.

You are too warm, sir. I can clear up everything to your entire satisfaction.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

'Sdeath! sir, you shall clear up nothing to my satisfaction.

WORTLEY.

Come, come, Mr. Doubtful; you and I are more on a par than these giddy young people. You ought to have more

sense than to make poor Harriet so miserable. Come, come, forget and forgive between man and wife. (*Aside*) 'Pon my life, he's a fine, gay, dashing young fellow!

[*They crowd round him.*

MR. DOUBTFUL.

One at a time, if you please. Madam, your carriage waits —no—she shan't go home—what would the world say? No —no—she shall stay where she is: but they are as bad as she is, and would rejoice in her company. I'll take lodgings for her—that would be still worse—they'd caricature me all over town for keeping my wife in private lodgings.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*aside to* BALDWIN).

We will retire and leave you together. Manage him as well as you can.

BALDWIN (*aside to* MRS. DOUBTFUL).

Be assured, madam, I shall act with discretion.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Madam, a word with you (*draws* MRS. DOUBTFUL *apart*). Harriet—you know how foolishly— (*softening*) Harriet—

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Indeed, you do me cruel injustice.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Eh! Harriet—go on—go on— (*softening into tenderness*).

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Excuse my dreadful anxiety. Have you seen Sir Harry?

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Sir Harry! It must break out. Patience—patience—what a fool I am! Sir Harry gives her dreadful anxiety. I *will* see him. I might have foreseen all this before I married a

school-girl. Go, madam—remain with your friends—your friends. I renounce you.

[*Exeunt* WORTLEY, ADELAIDE, *and* MRS. DOUBTFUL.

BALDWIN.

Stay, sir!—one word—give me an opportunity to explain.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Sir, I'll have no explanations!

BALDWIN.

But, sir, I really wish to be your friend.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

I suspected as much; and am grateful for your kind intentions.

BALDWIN.

Permit me to set this matter in its true light.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

No, sir, I will not permit you to set it in its true light. And now, sir, I should like to know upon what ground you have taken the liberty of thrusting yourself so unceremoniously into my private affairs?

BALDWIN.

In truth, I hoped to have been of some service in adjusting the misunderstanding between you and Sir Harry Vivid.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Then, sir, your officiousness has found a blind nut. There is no misunderstanding between Sir Harry and me. We are the best friends in the world.

BALDWIN.

You astonish me!

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Indeed! Then I'll astonish you still more. When you next interfere in a quarrel, I would strongly recommend you first, to make sure there *is* a quarrel; second, to wait till you're asked; and third, not to open the negotiations with the wife of "your friend!" (*Aside, as he goes out*) Oh! Doubtful, Doubtful, if you could only unmarry yourself, and begin the world again, what a lucky fellow you would be! [*Exit.*

BALDWIN.

Poor old gentleman (*turns to the side from whence* ADELAIDE *and the rest retired, and pauses thoughtfully, gazing in that direction*). She asked me a favour. Women rarely ask favours where they are reluctant to be laid under obligations. She can say "anything" to me—"anything."——I wish I could deal as familiarly with her; but her radiant spirits repel me, like an overpowering flood of sunshine.—She hardly respects him: she may love him notwithstanding. But when the *liaison* with Clara comes to be disclosed, will she love him then? No, she will hate and despise him. Then, if the delegates who are to wait on him to-night at his chambers should succeed in gaining him over to their cause, the last lingering fragments of her respect must perish for ever. He will then be lost every way—(*a pause*). But I mustn't waste time:—the ladies are waiting to hear the result of my *fortunate* interference with Mr. Doubtful.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

SIR HARRY VIVID'S *apartments in the Albany—as in Act I.—Night*—SIR HARRY *discovered lying on a sofa: a single lamp burning on a table, and throwing a dim light through the room.* SERVANT *in waiting.* SIR HARRY *betrays symptoms of impatience and restlessness, frequently changing his position from the head to the foot of the sofa, &c.*

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Charles!

SERVANT.

Sir?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Reach me a book. (CHARLES *goes to the shelves at the back, and takes down a book—which he hands to* SIR HARRY.)

SIR HARRY VIVID.

What's the matter with this lamp?

SERVANT (*examines the lamp*).

Nothing, sir.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

What do you mean by bringing me this? (*holding up the book*).

SERVANT.

Sir?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I ask you what do you mean by bringing me this—this? You understand English?

SERVANT.

Why, sir, you desired me to bring you a book.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Well.

SERVANT.

Well—that's a book.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

This?

SERVANT.

Yes, sir,—I *think* so—that's a book.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I desired you to bring me a book—

SERVANT.

Yes, sir.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*in a loud, passionate voice*).

I know I did—but did I desire you to bring me Hervey's Meditations amongst the Tombs? (*throws it down.*) Get me something else—no—I can't read. You may go. And observe, Charles, if any one should call (*looks at his watch*), it is now only nine—I'm not at home—or I'm in bed. I'll not see anybody on any pretence whatever. Observe, my orders are strict. [*Exit* SERVANT.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Yaw! (*throws himself on the sofa; yawns, and fidgets from side to side*)—There's something wrong in the sofa. (*Moves it about.*) Won't do. (*Walks about the room, disturbing the chairs, occasionally standing still, and occasionally humming a tune.*) I cannot get her smile out of my head! I still hear her voice—her low, sweet trembling voice!—(*sits in a chair near the front.*) Now I should just like to ask myself one serious question!—No—I shall do no such thing! (*Gets up and walks up and down the room hastily.*) I have no right to put such a question to any gentleman. Clara! beautiful riddle! It would be a great satisfaction to me to know exactly what you are thinking of at this moment. And that piece of drugget, your papa!—I wonder is he with his lawyer still. (*Looks at his watch.*) I've a great mind to—eh—no—yes—I will—I will—(*Enter* SERVANT.) Now, sir, what the devil brings you here?

SERVANT.

A servant below, sir, came with a note, that wants an immediate answer.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

And didn't I tell you I wasn't at home, sir?

SERVANT.

Yes, sir, but I thought you'd be at home to a note like this, sir—(*handing him a billet on tinted paper*).

SIR HARRY VIVID (*opening the note with impetuosity*).

'Tis from Clara herself!—Charles, tell the servant to be sure to wait for an answer. Let me have more lights—quickly—quickly. (SERVANT *lights lamps on the mantelpiece and goes out: the room becomes bright.*) Mystery upon mystery—I shall certainly—let me see—(*reads*) "Pray excuse the apparent impropriety of my request"—excuse it, I would excuse anything! "But my reasons are urgent"—so are mine!—"If you are disengaged"—Perfectly—I haven't an engagement in the world!—"at two o'clock to-morrow, may I beg you will call here"—I shall be as punctual as the clock!—damn it, I'll go now!—"Mr. Irwin will be out at that hour"—so much the better: 'pon my honour she's a very sensible girl—"I am *very* anxious to see you, *alone.*" The wish is thoroughly reciprocal, most captivating Clara! Now for an answer, brief, fervid, and full of devotion! (*Sits down to the table, writes rapidly—destroys several sheets of note paper—at last finishes a note, and folds it up, as he is about to write the address, the servant enters hastily.*) That's it.

SERVANT.

Sir—sir—I beg your pardon, sir—but it was not my fault.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

What do you mean? What's the matter?

SERVANT.

Why, sir, three gentlemen below, sir, come upon some public business—I don't know what it's about, sir, but they must see you.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Leave the room, and tell them they must come some other time—at two o'clock to-morrow, two o'clock to the minute.

SERVANT.

Did you say I should tell them to come at two o'clock to-morrow, sir?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Not gone yet?

SERVANT.

It was Thomas opened the door, sir, and said you were at home.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Then, sir, you go at once and say I'm not at home, that I don't intend to be at home, and that you don't think I'll ever be at home, again. Begone!

SERVANT.

It's too late, sir; they're here already.

[*Enter* GASP, RIBS, *and* TUMBLE; *they make awkward ceremonious bows to* SIR HARRY, *who, startled by their uncouth appearance, receives them with cold hauteur.*

SIR HARRY VIVID.

To what circumstance, gentlemen—(*turning aside to the servant*) you needn't wait—am I to attribute this rather untimely visit? (GASP, RIBS, *and* TUMBLE *look at each other with some tokens of indecision as to which of them ought to speak first.*) Pray, gentlemen, be speedy. The shortest answer is the best. What is your business with me?

GASP.

We are a committee of the Pro Bono Publico Society.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

The Pro Bono Publico Society--Well?

RIBS.

We wants free highways—open rights of way everywhere—

TUMBLE.

No fences, walls, or ditches—

GASP.

No tolls—no gates—no man-traps—no spring-guns—

RIBS.

No tramways—no railways—

TUMBLE.

No, nothink to prevent a man from walking where be pleases, and how he pleases.

GASP.

That's what we want.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Your demands, gentlemen, appear to me exceedingly moderate. I am only surprised you don't extend your views to the right of entering any house that happens to be in your way?

TUMBLE.

No—we respect the rights of private property.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

May I ask, sir, what are you?

TUMBLE.

I ?—Hepthorn Tumble ?—I ?—What am I, Ribs ?—I *was* a tailor.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

And you, sir, who exhibit such patriotic ardour for throwing open the highways ?

GASP.

Richard Gasp—a travelling lecturer. I feel the inconvenience of tolls and fences, and spring-guns practically—*ergo* I denounce them ; and until England returns to the patriarchal ages when—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

And what profession, sir, may you be ?

RIBS.

None—nothing. "I left no calling for this idle trade!" My name is Ribs—Tim Ribs. I devote myself to my country.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Well, gentlemen, Messrs. Tumbler—

TUMBLE.

Tumble.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Tumble, Gasp, and Ribs, once more let me ask you what is your business with me ?

GASP.

We are deputed by the Pro Bono Publico Society, to request that you will do us the honour to take the chair at our next public meeting.

TUMBLE.

Which will be held on Wednesday se'night, at the Water Wagtail tea-gardens.

RIBS.

Tickets threepence a head, including a slight refreshment.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

There must be some mistake. You—

GASP.

Oh! dear no—your name, Sir Harry Vivid, occupies a distinguished entry in the minutes of the Ingress and Egress Committee.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

You shall have egress, I promise you, sooner than you expect.—My very excellent friends, it is my misfortune to differ totally in opinion from you on these important subjects. I think the tolls ought to be considerably increased—all the foot-paths in the kingdom shut up—man-traps planted at convenient distances on the highways, to keep off foot-passengers—and no man permitted to walk out, even upon the most urgent business, without paying a heavy duty to the *Stamp* Office. You see it is quite impossible for me to take the chair, or even to attend your meeting—so, good night—no ceremony—good night—(*trying to get them off*).

GASP, RIBS, *and* TUMBLE.

But, Sir Harry—Sir Harry—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

It is quite useless.

GASP.

We cannot take back a verbal answer. If you are against us, say so on paper.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

You shall have my answer then in writing. (*Goes over to the table, writes with rapidity, and folds up the paper.*) There (*rising and advancing*).

(*Enter* SERVANT.)

SERVANT.

The servant waits below, sir, for an answer to the note.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

These tumblers have put everything out of my head. Here—here—be careful to give it to the right person (*hands him the letter intended for the deputation.—Exit* SERVANT.) I think she cannot mistake the passionate energy of that reply.

GASP.

Sir, you have forgotten to give us the answer.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

The answer?—So I have—There it is—(*hands the note intended for* CLARA). Now, recollect, let there be no misunderstanding in the matter—and so Messrs. Tumbler, Gasp, and Ribs, I do myself the honour of wishing you good night. [*Exit.*

[*They regard each other with looks of disappointment for a few minutes.*

GASP.

Gentlemen deputies: I propose that we read this queer-looking answer before we make our report to the Society.

TUMBLE.

I second that motion.

GASP.

All those who are of that opinion say "aye."

RIBS.

Aye.

GASP.

On the contrary, "no." The "ayes" have it. Carried nem.

con. (*He stands with some dignity in the centre—the others listen attentively. He finds considerable difficulty in opening the note.*) Here's a specimen of a Parliamentary paper! This shews you, gentlemen, how the time of the nation is wasted. (*Having succeeded at last in unfolding the note, he proceeds to read it*) "How can I find language to express the delight your unexpected summons has conferred upon me." (GASP *pauses and looks alternately in mute wonder at his friends.*) "I did not dare to hope that you would even think of me—yet I have never ceased thinking of you!"—Ribs!—"And the delicacy with which you have conveyed your request, which to me is a command!"—Tumble!—"I am impatient for the moment to arrive for our appointed meeting!"—(GASP *pauses again.*) "I shall give you endless proofs that your confidence has not been misplaced on your ever, ever grateful, Harry Vivid!" (*They stand in silence for a moment, looking at each other with expressions of astonishment.* RIBS *takes the letter from* GASP *and reads it again; when he has done* TUMBLE *takes it and reads it, the astonishment of each increasing.*)

RIBS.

Gentlemen deputies, what *does* he mean by all this?

GASP.

No matter, Ribs. There are some questions musn't be probed too deeply. Public men are often placed in awkward circumstances.

TUMBLE.

It's very uncommon language for a member of parliament.

GASP.

So it is—but so much the better for us. It will draw attention upon us, and that's exactly what we want. A good prosecution would be the making of us: but you never hear of a political prosecution now-a-days. I've got such an idea!—

Let us print this letter in our placard. "Sir Harry Vivid in the chair!" in large letters at the top, with his own note in full at the bottom. What d'ye think of that, Ribs?

RIBS.

It's sure to strike!

TUMBLE.

It will produce a convulsion. Already, I think, tolls is abolished!

GASP.

Then, gentlemen deputies, let us lose no time—and as we go, three cheers more for the Pro Bono Publico Society!

[*Exeunt shouting*

Re-enter SIR HARRY VIVID, *in his dressing-gown.*

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I forgot her note—Oh! the precious little scrap of enchantment (*looking for it on the table*)—here it is—what a fairy hand she writes—she's a delectable creature—(*reads it going out*) "reasons are urgent"—"to-morrow"—"very anxious"—"alone"—so you shall.—What will she say when she reads my answer? [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

LADY BELGRAVE'S. ADELAIDE *and* FANNY.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

It is so, indeed, cousin. Sir Harry is positively in love with this country Venus.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

What sort of creature is she?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Pretty, I believe; and, of course, simple and artless, as all village beauties are.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

The simplicity is all at our side in thinking them so. Your rustic coquets are full of low cunning.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

He goes abroad with her everywhere.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Mercy! does he boast of his chains? A gentleman to love a gypsy—a village minx, with sun-burnt cheeks, coarse red hands, great shapeless feet, and a figure bundled up like a soldier's wife! I wish you joy, Sir Harry; she'll make butter for you, and kennel your dogs, and—

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Why, cousin, I thought it was of no consequence to you who Sir Harry married?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Certainly, none in the world. I wish you'd let him marry any one he chooses without troubling me about it.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

If I thought it could have given you any uneasiness—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Uneasiness! Am I uneasy?—uneasiness! (*Tearing her fan.*) Why should I be uneasy?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Nay, cousin, why should you tear your fan?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Well, then, you have my secret.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Pray do not call it a *secret*, for I knew it long before

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Knew what?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

That you prefer Sir Harry to everybody else, in spite of all your gaiety and indifference.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

But you would not have me continue to prefer one who has broken his faith?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Broken his faith, cousin?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

It is too true.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Then you *have* kept your secret with exemplary constancy. So, he *did* avow his attachment for you?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

He did.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Well?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Well?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Did you refuse him?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

No.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Then you accepted him?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

No; I did neither the one nor the other. We were luckily interrupted at the interesting moment, and whenever we met after that, I always took care there should be a third person present. You were often in Sir Harry's way, my dear Fanny, although you didn't know it.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

And so by your affected unconcern in a matter in which your heart was so much involved, you suffered Sir Harry to suppose you indifferent to him, and have driven him, perhaps, to throw himself away upon another.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

How foolishly the girl talks! Why, child, what sort of man must that be who cannot see, through all the disguises of habit, fashion, and pride, that a woman loves him? Do you really believe that a woman's vanity can hide her feelings from the penetrating eyes of love? If Sir Harry could not discover me, he did not deserve to win me. But, Coz, I will take my revenge.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

I am afraid you have had your revenge before-hand in treating him so cruelly.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Heigho!

FANNY BELGRAVE.

There it is. Your vivacity will not sustain you.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

But are you sure the story is true? Who told you?

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT.

Mr. Baldwin. [*Exit.*

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Here he is. Question him yourself.

Enter MR. BALDWIN.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Just in time, Mr. Baldwin. This very moment we were speaking of you. (*With affected unconcern*) Fanny, what was that you were saying about Mr. Baldwin?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Oh! (*trying to remember*) Oh!—yes—the young lady out of Shropshire—isn't it Shropshire, Mr. Baldwin?—Sir Harry Vivid is going to be married to.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Yes—I believe that was it—ha! ha! ha! Sir Harry going to be married to a creature with a bunch of spring crocuses in her hand—ha! ha! ha! like one of our grandmothers' shepherdesses worked in chenille! ha! ha! really it is so ridiculous.

BALDWIN.

Why—going to be married?—(*smiling*)—did I say going to be married?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Oh! yes, you did—positively—

BALDWIN (*mysteriously*).

Well—appearances *are* rather suspicious.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

What appearances?

BALDWIN.

The fact is—at least so I have heard, for I really know nothing about it personally—that Sir Harry is constantly with this lady—Shropshire?—yes, I think she is from Shropshire. They are quite notorious in the ring in Hyde Park—they drive a pair of spotted grays—silver and azure liveries—dark blue phaeton—I am told they make a most remarkable figure.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! he's completely lost. The sooner he's married and settled in the country the better.

BALDWIN.

But the strangest circumstance of all remains behind. Hitherto he has been perfectly independent in politics: now, all of a sudden, he has become a sort of leveller.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

A leveller!

BALDWIN.

He has joined a sort of vagrant society for—ha! ha!—for—ha!—pray pardon me—ha! ha!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

For what?

BALDWIN.

For throwing open the highways, abolishing tolls, and establishing a free right of way through every gentleman's domain in the country. See! (*Hands Adelaide a printed paper, which she reads earnestly.*)

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*gravely aside*).

This is final. When he stoops to such quarry as this, the dream of his soaring spirit is over!

FANNY BELGRAVE.

I see clearly if I remain she will betray herself; so I'll steal away; and that will break up the conversation. [*Exit.*

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Where's Fanny?—Gone?—well—no matter. (*A pause.*) Do you know I've a great mind to make you the depositary of a very great secret. Would you preserve it carefully?

BALDWIN.

With my life. (*He draws chairs; they sit.*)

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

(*She attempts to begin several times.*) You will think it very strange—but you must know this Sir Harry—ha! ha! ha!—I cannot help thinking of the vagrant society—

BALDWIN.

Ha! ha!—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I knew you would laugh. A long time ago—he actually—ha! ha! can't you guess?

BALDWIN.

Guess!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

He had the folly—the impudence—to—to—I had scarcely come home from school when—

BALDWIN.

To propose for you?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

No—no—no—propose for me? no—he made a declaration —oh! pure common-place.

BALDWIN.

And you?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Why, there the matter ended, that's all.

BALDWIN.

And is this the secret?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! no. From that time to the present Sir Harry never renewed his addresses; yet—(*aside*) how hard it is to make a man understand these things!

BALDWIN.

Yet, although Sir Harry has never renewed his addresses, you do not quite feel yourself at liberty to make another choice.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

You have exactly expressed it—only I don't want to make any choice.

BALDWIN.

And in this disagreeable situation, you are anxious to assert your freedom?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Precisely.

BALDWIN.

But how to do it without leading him to suspect that it is only retaliation—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

That's the whole secret. And now I'll tell you my plan. You know I have very volatile spirits, so you mustn't mind the extravagance of my little comedy, in which I want you to take a principal character. The part may not be exactly to your taste, but I'm sure you'll act it delightfully.

BALDWIN.

No——no.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Well then—as there is a report abroad of Sir Harry's approaching marriage, I intend to circulate a similar rumour on my side.

BALDWIN.

An admirable device—of course a joke.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Of course—ha!—ha!—a joke, but to be taken seriously by him. Now, on Tuesday night we are to have a rout here. Sir Harry and all the world will be with us. That will be the very time to see what effect it will have, and to terminate all doubts for ever. What do you think of my stratagem?

BALDWIN.

That it will be decisive. But you have omitted an important part of the plot. You must have a lover. Who is to assume the *role* of the happy bridegroom elect?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Why, that's the very part I mean for you. But you take it very gravely.

BALDWIN.

I was only thinking what a difficult task you have assigned me.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Difficult? Why, you have nothing to do but to look bewildered—to sigh out of sheer superabundant emotion—and to fidget in all manner of ways you can think of.

BALDWIN.

And I am to act the happy lover? I fear I may forget that I am only an actor.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! there's not much danger of that.

BALDWIN.

More than you apprehend, madam. To look upon you with a lover's tenderness—to imagine that I see my own burning thoughts mantling into your cheeks—to press your hand—to gaze my soul into your eyes—and, as the revellers come and go, passing us in crowds, and uttering silent prayers for our future happiness, to whisper in your ear for the first time, with a voice broken by tears of joy, the spell that has absorbed my whole heart—Adelaide! Adelaide!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Excellent—to the very life!

BALDWIN.

To tell you how long your image has filled my imagination—what agonies of doubts and fears I have undergone—what plans I have laid to create an interest in your heart—how distractedly I loved you—against hope—madly loved you—and then to lead you forth—my own! my triumph!—to claim you proudly in the midst of the groups of envious gazers—and this,

Adelaide,—let me linger on the sound that sinks like divine music into my soul—Adelaide, this—this, merely acting!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Well—for a first rehearsal, that is really admirable.

BALDWIN.

But what if the counterfeit become at last inspired with the vital principle of the reality—if the actor grow into that which he affects to play—if the masquer, habituated to the tones and attitudes he has worn but in jest, should find, when he desires to put them off, that they are fixed upon him for ever—that he who came in merriment and mockery to play a pleasant joke, leaves the bright presence in sad and bitter earnest—his merriment turned to ashes, his mockery to the thing he mocked, not as he mocked it full of life and hope and happiness, but hearsed for the grave.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! but the character mustn't be played to such extremities. You'll over-do it.

BALDWIN.

It may over-do itself—it may carry me into an enthusiasm that may destroy the sense of everything but what I am and what I feel—that may turn the fiction into truth, and give to mere imitation the fiery energy of undying love. Oh! could you know—confusion! we are interrupted.

Enter WORTLEY, *drawing in* SIR HARRY VIVID.

WORTLEY.

Here is Sir Harry Vivid, my dear, come to pay you a flying visit. I caught him passing the door—he says he has an appointment—but I made him come in, for all that.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Really, Miss Temple, I ought to apologize for such a hasty call—for, in fact, I have not a moment to stay.

WORTLEY.

He was in such a devil of a hurry to his appointment, that he would scarcely stop to say how dy'e do! But here you are, and you may now go away as soon as you like. I hate people to be in a hurry—it's my way.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! Sir Harry Vivid, don't let me detain you. *I* am engaged also. (*She turns and speaks to Baldwin.*)

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

Who is that fellow? He seems on excessively good terms with himself, and with the lady too. (*Aloud*) I assure you —I know it is, entirely, Mr. Wortley.

WORTLEY.

There, now, you may be off. You have shown yourself, and I'm satisfied; for, to tell you the truth, I thought you had made a vow never to come here again.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

I should like to know who that fellow is; he engrosses her whole attention. (*Aloud*) Then as you are so good, I'll take my leave. (*Stands looking at Adelaide and Baldwin.*)

WORTLEY.

Well, why don't you go, if you're in such a hurry?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

My dear sir, I assure you—(*aside*) I never saw him before; (*aloud*) the fact is, that a very particular appointment. (*Aside*) He takes confounded liberties with her.

WORTLEY.

Well, upon my word, for a gentleman who has a very

particular appointment, you don't seem in any very particular hurry to keep it.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I intended to have taken the earliest opportunity of waiting on Miss Temple; but— (*Aside*) The most impudent dog I ever saw.

WORTLEY.

Five minutes ago you were in such a terrible hurry that I was obliged to carry you in, *vi et armis;* and now you seem determined not to go. But you sha'n't break your appointment on my account. I can't bear people to be put out of their way. Good morning—there now, my dear Sir Harry, go along. (*Forcing him out.*)

SIR HARRY VIVID.

My dear sir, I am very much obliged to you. (*Aside*)
Not even a look! I know I'm late—thank you. (*Aside*)
Confound the fellow, who can he be? [*Exit.*

WORTLEY.

There he goes—as great a madcap as ever. But, Addy, my dear, what have you heard about Harriet—poor Mrs. Doubtful?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! very good news, Guardy. Finding that it was all a pretence about the duel, she has made up her mind not to submit to any more of the old gentleman's caprices.

WORTLEY.

Well, if she has courage—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! she has enough of courage, depend upon her. She is to be with us on Tuesday.

WORTLEY.

But suppose he won't consent?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

She'll come without his consent. He has taken her somewhere into the country, I suppose, to prevent her; but she has promised me, and I know she will keep her word.

WORTLEY.

No doubt. A woman is always sure to keep her word in anything perverse. They're famous all over the world for their obstinacy,—(*Adelaide looks at him*)—always excepting my amiable ward. But come, my dear, the carriage is at the door this half hour. Mr. Baldwin, will you give your arm to Miss Temple? Oh! these women, married or unmarried, there's no managing them without a little flattery. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

*Interior of a room in a cottage at Hounslow—Window in the centre at the back—Door towards the side—*MRS. DOUBTFUL *discovered sitting at a table with embroidery, &c. and* MR. DOUBTFUL *leaning out of a window.*

MRS. DOUBTFUL (*sings.*)

Tira la, tira la! well, that *is* pretty! (*Sings, changing the air.*) Sa, sa, sa, sa! Rose colour would blend better with that French white; (*changes the air again*) Fa, la, la, la! fa, la, la!

MR. DOUBTFUL (*leaves the window, which he closes petulantly, and walks about the room for two or three minutes, then flings himself into a chair opposite* MRS. DOUBTFUL.)

Mrs. Doubtful! if you *must* sing, I wish you would sing a song—one entire song. Bits and scraps are horridly tantalizing.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Do you think so?

MR. DOUBTFUL.

I do think so, madam.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Then I'll sing one entire song to please you.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Not to please me, Mrs. Doubtful. In my opinion, ladies should never sing—especially married ladies.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

And wouldn't you allow us to sing even for our amusement? Be so good to hand me that piece of silk.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Amusement! pshaw!

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I suppose you mean to say *you* have no amusements of your own?

MR. DOUBTFUL (*with contempt*).

Amusements! no, madam, not one.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Oh! yes; I know one; a very favourite amusement of yours, too.

MR. DOUBTFUL (*places himself opposite to her, and looks sternly at her*).

May I ask, Mrs. Doubtful, what is my favourite amusement?

MRS. DOUBTFUL (*imitating his position*).

Finding fault without cause, Mr. Doubtful.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

And do you mean to say, madam, that I have no right in my own house to find fault when I like, as I like, and with whatever I like, just as it suits my fancy? I ask you, madam, do you mean to say that?

MRS. DOUBTFUL, (*speaking perfectly at ease*).

I mean to say, that in or out of your own house, you have no right to do wrong—that you have no right to find fault where no fault exists—and that that which you would be afraid or ashamed to do in any one else's house, you ought to blush to do in your own.

MR. DOUBTFUL (*aside*).

I wonder is there anything in the air of Hounslow to make women savage. She would have dropped into a fit before she'd have spoken in this way in town. She has certainly undergone an extraordinary change. I'll not seem to mind her. We'll see what effect that will have. (*He goes up the room dancing a minuet step, accompanying the motion with a tune.*)

MRS. DOUBTFUL (*with surprise*).

Mr. Doubtful!

MR. DOUBTFUL.

My dear!

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I had no notion you danced—and you can sing too.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Oh! dear, yes!—la, la, la! When I was at Cambridge, I—I— (*aside*) How it puts one out of breath! (*Aloud*) I—I—was rather a distinguished dancer. (*He whirls round exhausted, and drops into a chair*).

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Well, I declare—ha! ha! ha! it is very amusing.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

I suppose, Mrs. Doubtful, you think I have no right to dance or sing in my own house.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Quite the contrary. I hope you'll never dance or sing anywhere else.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Why, madam?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Oh! because dancing and singing are amongst the pleasures married people ought to keep at home.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

What a sweet sentiment! (*Approaching her lovingly*) Harriet, you make me young again, (*a minuet step*) 'pon my life you do.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

There, there, don't come too close—you'll spoil my pretty groups.

MR. DOUBTFUL (*delighted*).

Spoil her pretty groups! (*dancing away*).

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Well, now, Mr. Doubtful, we have been here one whole day and a half.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

I know it, my dear.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Two questions arise out of that. First, why did we come? Second, when do we go?

MR. DOUBTFUL.

We came to escape the season in town—we go, as it may be.

MRS. DOUBTFUL (*rising*).

Then we came to no purpose, and are likely to go away sooner than we intended.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Don't you like the place?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Oh! it's all well enough—and poor enough, too, if it were worth while to trouble one's head about furniture and such things. But we are on the Great Western road, within a drive of Hyde Park—our establishment in town just as we left it—to escape the season is impossible.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Impossible, Mrs. Doubtful?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I have no objection to give up the season, as far as I can—but I have a very decided objection to a morning flitting to Hounslow to escape the season by a subterfuge.

MR. DOUBTFUL (*aside*).

She's mad! (*Aloud, walking up gravely to her.*) Madam! I never met a woman in my life who understood logic; but if you are for arguing the question, let me tell you—

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I'll spare you the trouble. I am not arguing. I merely mean to do what is proper and reasonable. I go to town to-morrow.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

You do?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

At twelve o'clock.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

I'm stupified with amazement. Mrs. Doubtful, am I to have no voice in this?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

You shall have a seat in the carriage if you like.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

But suppose, madam, I were to put a veto upon it—suppose I would not consent to go?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Then I must go without you.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Incredible! And for what purpose, Mrs. Doubtful—I hope you'll excuse the liberty—for what purpose, madam, (*with rising anger,*) do you thus, with astonishing hardihood, persist in going to town, with or without your husband? Yes, madam, your husband—whether he consent or not?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

You need not speak so loud—there is no terror in the word husband. It ought to be a word instinct with endearing associations, and not loaded with threats and tyranny. I am going to town to-morrow for the purpose of keeping an engagement.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

For the purpose of avoiding which I left town yesterday.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I told you before we left town of my engagement at Lady Belgrave's, and it was on condition that I should keep my promise I consented to come here.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

And I told you, madam, that I disliked the engagement, and would not be bound by any condition.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Nor are you. It is I who am bound.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

It is idle to reason with you.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I wish you would try.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Mrs. Doubtful, once for all, I am determined you shall not go. If it comes to a trial of strength, madam, we shall see who is master.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Mr. Doubtful, once for all, I am determined, and will go.

If it comes to a trial of common sense, sir, we shall see who is mistress.

(*During the above dialogue, the* HON. MR. PAUSE *has entered, and reached the centre of the stage. In turning up, both discover him at the same moment.*)

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Mr. Pause! (*aside*) The most lucky interruption!

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Mr. Pause! (*aside*) The most impudent intrusion!

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

You are surprised to see me—I know you are. But, upon my honour, I did not hear a single word. Domestic privacy is sacred—such as it is—I respect even its transgressions.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

In the name of all the comets, past, present, and to come, Mr. Pause, how did you find us out?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

That's the puzzle, my dear sir. For who should have thought of a new-married couple running out of town just at the opening of the season, and burying themselves in Hounslow?—Hounslow, my dear sir, in the name of all the comets you mentioned just now, why did you pitch upon Hounslow?

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Why?—Because this cottage—remarkably pretty place in summer—belongs to a tenant of mine.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

It's no business of mine. Hounslow! You might as well

have gone to Hounsditch! But I'll tell you how I found you out. I was driving to town from Windsor—(between ourselves, there's a vacancy expected in the household—such as it is)—and changing horses down in the village, I thought I saw your carriage in the inn-yard. You know I have a genius for liveries—crests—arms—I can distinguish the rank of a coronet farther off than any man living. It's a species of intuition. I knew your coachman at once by his buttons—the hog rampant—that's your crest, I believe. So I asked the fellow, and he informed me that you were here. "There," said he, "up the hill, among the trees." So without waiting a moment, I plunged into the thicket: and thick it is with a vengeance, for I was obliged to break down half a hundred of evergreens before I could make my way through the labyrinth. At last I got here, and as there was nobody to show me the way up stairs, I came alone—and here I am—such as I am.

MRS. DOUBTFUL (*aside*).

The presence of a third person would be a most agreeable restraint. I'll endeavour to prevail upon him to stay.

MR. DOUBTFUL (*aside*).

If I could only induce him to remain for dinner:—I'd give the world to consult him. Pause is a safe man.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Well—*'tis* a pretty place for warm weather—that clump of trees, and the spire coming through the top—very pretty indeed. I always thought a church-spire a very desirable object—in a picture.

(*As* PAUSE *returns down the stage*, MR. DOUBTFUL *advances towards him at one side, and* MRS. DOUBTFUL *at the other.*)

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

It really was very kind of you to make us this visit—

MR. DOUBTFUL.

And now as you *are* here—

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Certainly you will remain with us—

MR. DOUBTFUL.

You will stay to dinner—

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Why not stay till to-morrow?

MR. DOUBTFUL (*aside*).

What's in the wind now? Does she want to consult him too?

MRS. DOUBTFUL (*aside*).

It's very strange Mr. Doubtful should be so pressing. I wonder what can be his object.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

I accept your hospitality with a thousand thanks. It will exactly fill up the interval between this and Lady Belgrave's ball.

MR. DOUBTFUL (*aside*).

And he's going to the ball. I thought he had some sense. I'm sorry I asked him.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

But I'm in such disorder—(*looking at his dress*)—travelling costume—

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Oh! you need not apologise—we came down ourselves at such short notice—for (*looking at Mr. Doubtful*) it was quite a sudden thought—that we must lay ceremony quite aside. So put yourself at ease; we dine between six and seven—there's Mr. Doubtful—and there's a few old books, and if you can't fill up the time pleasantly, I'll come by-and-by and help you. [*Exit.*

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Sweet creature that—charming spirits! What a flow of language—what simplicity—what style! Doubtful, you're the happiest man in Europe.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Pause, you know nothing about it.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

So much the worse. I wish I did.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Charming spirits!—an indomitable will. Flow of language!—the eloquence of a termagant. Simplicity!—the simplicity of the dove, with the cunning of the serpent. Style!—fiddlededee. Pause, you're a bachelor—every bachelor is as ignorant as a drumstick. Marry, and you'll find out the secret.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Would you advise me to marry, seriously?

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Sit down. That's the very thing I want to talk to you about. You see Mrs. Doubtful—now she looks like a model of a wife.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

So she does.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Temper—

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Beauty—voice—motion! I'm certain she dances like a divinity.

MR. DOUBTFUL.

You're going to Lady Belgrave's ball to-morrow night?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Wouldn't miss it, my dear Doubtful, for the world!

MR. DOUBTFUL (*rising indignantly, and snatching his hat*).

Come, let us take a walk in the grounds to give us an appetite.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

But you had something to talk about?

MR. DOUBTFUL.

That will do after dinner—any time—come along! (*Aside*) Consult him! He's worse than she is.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE (*looking for his hat*).

What a wonderful hurry you are in. Isn't it an easterly wind?

MR. DOUBTFUL.

Easterly?—South-west.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

I'm so horridly afraid of the rheumatism.

MR. DOUBTFUL (*aside*).

I wish you had it with all my heart.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

It's very pinching for a South-west.

MR. DOUBTFUL (*aside*).

She shall not go the ball—that I'm determined upon.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

CLARA'S *apartment as in Act* III.—CLARA *enters with an open letter in her hand.*

CLARA.

It is quite incredible—that he should insult me so wantonly! He might have declined coming at least in terms of common courtesy. (*A knock at the street door.*) How that knock startled me!

SERVANT *shows in* SIR HARRY VIVID.

SERVANT.

Sir Harry Vivid. [*Exit.*

SIR HARRY VIVID (*with ardour*).

Punctual to the moment, sweet Clara—(*he perceives her altered manner*)—I beg pardon, Miss Irwin.

CLARA.

Is it possible?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Come, come, we perfectly understand each other.

CLARA.

Sir Harry Vivid, one of us at least is under some strange misapprehension. To what circumstance am I to attribute this visit?

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

Well, that's modest! (*to her*) To the honour of your very special invitation, to be sure.

CLARA.

My invitation!

SIR HARRY VIVID.

'Gad, I'm afraid there *is* some mistake. Did you not write to ask me to call on you at two o'clock to-day?

CLARA.

I did, certainly.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Well, that's intelligible, so far. I replied, that I should be with you to the minute. Here I am. It is now exactly two minutes after two. I hope that's intelligible also.

CLARA.

I am ignorant of your motive for wounding me. There is your letter, sir, refusing abruptly—nay, rudely—to accede to my request.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

It *is* my handwriting, unquestionably; but—oh! I see how it is—(*reads*)—"abhor your principles"—ha! ha!—

(*looking at her in the intervals*)—"since you insist on an answer"—ha! ha!—"could not sanction the meeting you propose"—ha! ha!—"decline all further intercourse"—ha! ha! Don't you understand all this?

CLARA.

Sir—I—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

The equivoque is supremely ridiculous. It is superscribed to you certainly, but it was intended for a set of highwaymen and rat-catchers who wanted me to—but, now I think of it, they must have got the answer I designed for you. Oh! my dear Clara—Miss Irwin, I mean—you haven't the faintest conception of the fatal consequences of the blunder I have committed.

CLARA.

Fatal!

SIR HARRY VIVID.

What will ministers say of my "unbounded devotion" to the Pro Bono Publico Society? What will Pause say? What will everybody say?

CLARA.

That it was an accident. Let us think no more of it.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Ay, let us dismiss it from our thoughts. (*Aside*) How beautifully ruffled she looks this morning!—true, most charming Miss Irwin! Our time is too precious to be wasted on such trifles—(*looks inquiringly at her*). H—m—m—you are quite alone?

CLARA (*embarrassed*).

Quite.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Your note said (*approaching her*) that you wanted very particularly to speak to me *alone*.

CLARA (*maintaining her reserve, motions for chairs, which* SIR HARRY *brings*).

Yes, I have something to communicate, but it requires a little resolution.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

She's going to make a declaration!

CLARA.

I have frequently asked myself what can be your real opinion of me. The strange way we met—the suddenness with which our acquaintance has grown up—these lodgings —my situation altogether.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

That's coming pretty close to the point! (*To her*) What odd questions to put to yourself!—you cannot doubt the opinion I entertain of you.

CLARA.

I will be more frank than you. Suffering makes us truer to ourselves. With you it is mere pastime, and this little adventure will be forgotten in a week, or only remembered in a jest over your wine. With me it will be a lasting memory, and will probably colour the remainder of my life, for good or evil.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

It's coming. (*To her*) Why, as to deep impressions, they require time, you know; but—

CLARA.

I solicited this interview to communicate something that concerns your happiness more than mine, Sir Harry Vivid. We *must* be sincere at both sides. I know you do not think I am what I seem.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Think? I don't know what to think. In you and your history, whatever it may be, I feel a deep interest—but of your father, honestly, since you will have it so, I think that —I think that I don't know how he came to be your father, that's all.

CLARA.

He is *not* my father.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Not your father! I knew it—I felt it—I could have sworn you were gently born. Let me congratulate you. I don't care who your father was, so long as you disown that —— gentleman, with the stock in hand.

CLARA.

Yet, in disowning him, I acknowledge my own disgrace in having acquiesced in such a deception.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Deception! half of human life is deception. You shall tell me all about it by-and-bye—but at this moment, you look more beautiful than ever; hang all fathers—they are good for nothing but their daughters!—Charming Clara! Nay, you must not look so provokingly melancholy. (*He attempts to take her hand, which she withdraws.*)

CLARA (*rises*)

Would Sir Harry Vivid use this libertine manner to Miss Temple?

SIR HARRY VIVID (*rises*).

Miss Temple! In the name of wonder, what do you know about Miss Temple?

CLARA.

Everything; your suppressed attachment—her affected indifference.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Pshaw! it's all moonshine; don't spoil the pretty speech you were going to make. Miss Temple's a coquet—a butterfly. Somebody has imposed on you. Don't mind her, but go on, sweet Clara.

CLARA.

No; somebody has imposed on *her*.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Well, with all my heart—only tell me what you were going to say just now.

CLARA.

About Miss Temple?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I wish she was in Jerusalem. How *can* you possibly know anything about Miss Temple? Don't be so full of cross purposes; we're losing the auspicious moments—that old hawk will be coming home, and ——

CLARA.

You wrong yourself; you are superior to the levities under

which you try to bury your heart. You would not finesse your real feelings if you knew the danger impending over the happiness, perhaps the honour, of Miss Temple.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Danger! Nonsense.

CLARA.

She has been induced to believe that you have sacrificed her to a new attachment, and are about to be married to another. Her pride revolts at your supposed infidelity. A resentment of that kind is the most dangerous crisis in a woman's life, and there is one who is taking advantage of it for his own profit.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

If this be really true—not that I have any interest in Miss Temple—but then, that they should tell her I was going to be married—that's the only part of it I care about.

CLARA.

When you hear that she whom you love—yes! love—you cannot deceive *me*.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Excuse me—you grow too serious—upon my honour I don't half like this. I saw him—that's the gentleman, is it? And so, then, some one is laying nets for Miss Temple?

CLARA.

So thickly, too, that if you do not hasten to rescue her, she is lost.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

But how did you obtain this information?

CLARA.

It was to tell you that I desired to see you. It is a long story.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

It cannot exhaust my curiosity. (*They sit.*)

CLARA.

You judged truly when you suspected that I was gently born. My father was a younger son of a man of fortune—he made a love-match, and was cut off with a commission in the army. His heart was broken—but he was of a proud lineage, and he struggled on. My mother, I have heard was beautiful—how dotingly he loved her! even in her grave he held her memory so sacred, that when they offered to make up some rich and lofty alliance to repair the error of his youth, he spurned them with contempt. I remember nothing of my mother, but a sweet placid face, like a vision smiling upon me in slumber.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Proceed—proceed!

CLARA.

Promotion went on slowly; he had nothing but his sword—not a rood of earth—not a shilling but his pay. His fine spirit chafed and petted, and wore out. In all his troubles, however, he had a friend in whom he confided—one whom he had tried in adversity and found faithful. Mordaunt, his friend, had a paternal fortune that rendered him independent. To him my father confided me on his death-bed. I shall never forget that solemn bequest—and with what zeal Mordaunt undertook the charge.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

And fulfilled it with honour! He could not—he dare not do otherwise.

CLARA.

He was a man of unimpeachable honour—one of whom truth was as much a part of his life as the air he breathed. But listen—listen: he placed me in the country with some friends of his own. He spared no pains upon my education, and constantly watched over my progress. What happy days were those! I knew not what it was to shed a tear, except tears of joy when Mordaunt used to come, and task me upon everything that happened in his absence. My whole world was to comply with all his wishes while he was away, and to show him when he came how industrious I had been. And he came constantly—so often that the day he came not was lost in waiting and wondering. (*A pause.*)

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I anticipate the sequel.

CLARA.

You cannot—no one living could foresee the sequel. At last he came less frequently—less and less—and finally ceased to come altogether. A chill fell upon me. For the first time I was alone in the world. Letters came sometimes, but they were vague and illusive. Time passed over—I know not how long—I knew not what had happened. But we met again. God! how changed was Mordaunt! his face was marked with lines of thought—he was no longer at ease with himself—his tranquil and happy spirit had become troubled and corrupted—his patience and truth, and the beauty of his life, were gone! Why do I dwell upon this? Everything was lost—fortune—friends—rank. Mordaunt had become a gambler!

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Unhappy Clara!

CLARA.

Well—I know not what infatuation led me to hope that I might yet preserve him. I had a strong faith in his early principles. I thought that as a bird, however far it wanders through the air, still returns to its nest, Mordaunt would at last return to the associations he had renounced.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

And he did?

CLARA.

I sacrificed much to accomplish this object. But he had gone too far to be drawn back by my weak efforts. He had embarked in a new project. (*Strongly agitated.*) Just now you thought you saw the sequel when it was remote and dark—now that it is close at hand, and as clear as sunlight, can you not spare me the relation?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I cannot see it.

CLARA (*rising*).

Oh! blind and insensate! Fly to Lady Belgrave's, and you will find Miss Temple listening to Mordaunt's eloquence.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Good heaven! I never looked for such an issue.

CLARA.

Let us not wait for explanations. You shall know more hereafter. You will hear a report that Miss Temple is about to be married.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

To Mordaunt?

CLARA.

To Baldwin, the name by which alone she knows him. The report is false—a mere *ruse* to test your feelings. But you will know how to act. And now one word for myself. Do not think me guilty of *betraying* Mordaunt. I would die sooner! We must have no revenge on any side. You owe me some acknowledgments, and will guarantee that. My sole thought is to save him—the guardian of my childhood! It is for others to condemn him, not for me. There may be mixed feelings in my heart—I dare not trust myself to probe it: but I have a woman's nature, and you will be generous enough to spare its weakness.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Admirable Clara! how shall I testify how much I prize your integrity and firmness?

CLARA.

No—no—no!—my part is over.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

No—your part is not over yet. But *nous verrons.* What a world of mischief you have inflicted on me!—broken up the prospect of a delightful morning, and spoiled at least one whole night's sleep.

CLARA.

To-morrow night will terminate all your penalties. The *ruse* is to be played off at the ball.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

The ball, then, is to decide my fate. How my head swims!—it is full of all sorts of stories. To-morrow morn-

ing you must permit me to call. We shall have much to talk about. Nay, you must not dismiss me with such a look of exile. Be cheerful. I am so. Why shouldn't you? Farewell!—there—there—farewell! How my confounded head reels!

[*As he is going, he knocks against* DROUK, *who is coming in.* SIR HARRY *looks at him with mixed contempt and ridicule, then bowing to* CLARA, *retires.* CLARA *sinks into a chair.* DROUK *stands in the centre confounded.*

DROUK.

Whew! (*with a long emphatic whistle*) that's it is it? But I don't see why you should explode upon *me* for all that. Can't the devil's limb fall in love with a pretty girl without knocking down her father?

CLARA (*with indignant aversion*).

Father!

DROUK (*aside*).

Eugh! there's gunpowder at the bottom of this love-making. She'll blow up if I don't soothe her a bit. (*To* CLARA) It's all right—he's smit, Miss Clary—I see it—I *ought* to know—I'm an old hand. Our fortune's made. I wish you joy, my child!

CLARA (*starting up, and speaking in a choking voice*).

Child!—*your* child?—*You?*—This is a dreadful punishment, but it is just! (*Buries her face in her hands.*) Years have passed away since I heard that word of love, and it has lain hushed, but not forgotten, in my heart! I remember my father as if it were yesterday—his noble features are speaking there before me. Could he see me at this humiliating moment! his voice, full of tenderness, as it always

was, would falter with reproaches. Child!—*his* child!—(*After a severe struggle, she gradually stands erect.*) I have no father—but I have the memory of one that will not brook the disgrace to which your familiarity would degrade me.

DROUK (*sneering malignantly*).

You should have thought of that before, Miss Clary! But what does it signify about your father, so long as you've got a husband? Whew? [*Exit.*

CLARA.

That was a bitter truth. I *should* have thought of it before. But I did all for the best—all to save *him* to whom my *father* confided me. Our path of duty is sometimes so dark that it perplexes us! My head may err—but—(*placing her hand on her heart*)—ah! Mordaunt, will you not spare me? [*She rushes out.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

BALDWIN'S *Lodgings.* BALDWIN *walking about in agitation.* DROUK *standing at the side.*

DROUK.

I tell you she knows more than she ought. Women always contrive to find out everything.

BALDWIN (*half aside*).

Ay, when their affections supply motives to their penetration.

DROUK.

What's to be done?

BALDWIN.

You will absolutely goad me to madness. What would you have me do? You undertake to assist me—I give you your own terms—I am on the eve of success—and you come to me with a face of consternation—and ask, what's to be done? What is the meaning of all these hints about Clara?

DROUK.

Do be patient a little. The moment I mentioned her name, you flew into such a passion that it was quite impossible to find room for a word. Before that, you were as quiet as a mouse.

BALDWIN.

Well—well—I will endeavour to be calm—go on—what about Clara?

DROUK.

I suspect she has discovered the whole plan.

BALDWIN (*suppressing his emotion*).

But—even—so—

DROUK.

Are we safe in her hands?

BALDWIN.

Safe?—there is something in that.—Yet what motive could she have?

DROUK.

You must know that best.

BALDWIN.

How did you discover this?

DROUK.

I have discovered nothing. I judge by her looks and manner—this morning she was as pale as a ghost, and as silent as a mummy. I tried to get her to talk—but the more I tried, the more she wouldn't. That looks suspicious—eh?

BALDWIN.

She knew our objects partly at first.

DROUK.

There was the grand mistake. You would not take my advice and tell her the whole, and see at once whether she would go through with us or not. Half confidence always ends badly—it provokes curiosity and revenge.

BALDWIN.

Revenge! (*half aside.*) Can this be possible? Clara meditate revenge!—no, she is too generous, too gentle! (*To Drouk.*) I could *not* explain the whole to her. It is idle to ask for reasons: besides, if I did, it would have revolted her, and, in a moment of offended pride, she might have betrayed us.

DROUK.

That's precisely what I fear at this instant. She's galled some way—I'm sure of that.

BALDWIN.

But she knows nothing?

DROUK.

Nothing from me; but she and Sir Harry have been together. How do you know what she has found out—what discoveries may have been made on both sides?—she confessing the real state of things, and he put on his guard, and watching every stir.

BALDWIN.

Clara do this?—Deliberately perform an act of perfidy against me? I should as soon believe that the heavens would fall and crush us at our prayers. Yet, it may be true; we are no longer what we were.

DROUK.

How can you tell but she may have overheard some of our conversation about Miss Temple?

BALDWIN.

Ah! that explains all. I see it as clearly as if it were written before my eyes in characters of flame. We were careless — confiding — unreflecting. I never thought of Clara—except as a household familiar thing, that would neither hear nor question, but move noiselessly away as I spoke of other subjects. I forgot the past—it was nothing to me—my whole soul was in the guilty present: and Clara was there—with her youthful heart and her eager feelings —and heard all—

DROUK.

And to night the ball—

BALDWIN.

She must be ignorant of that?

DROUK.

I can answer for nothing. Sir Harry was with her this morning; and when he left her, her eyes were as red as fire—all this might be the very thing we wanted. She may have fallen in love with him, or he with her: but it is pretty plain, he hasn't fallen in love with me.

BALDWIN.

Do you suppose she really loves Sir Harry?

DROUK.

I'm sure I hope so.

BALDWIN.

Hope so?

DROUK.

Why not?—wouldn't that settle them both out of the way, and leave the field clear?

BALDWIN.

So it would—her eyes were red when he left her?—this morning, too—and the ball to-night—(*musing.*)

DROUK.

Now do you understand why I ask, what is to be done?

BALDWIN.

Perfectly—the ball to-night—to-morrow will be too late.—It must be done to-night—how?—how?—I cannot steal her in a blaze of lamps, before two or three hundred people. The difficulties seem to increase as I advance. I thought all secure till now—now all seems lost—what was easy yesterday, is impracticable to-day. Yet nothing has happened—nothing has changed—except Clara! Why should that image haunt me? Why should it never have looked till now, as if it rose out of the grave to reproach me? I'll think no more of it—the ball—the ball. Come, Drouk,—let's have some champagne—'twill give us new life and spirits. We'll drink Miss Temple's health.—Some champagne there—the world's before us—a prosperous world, full of wise and honest people—and beauty and wealth—that's our mark—Adelaide! Adelaide! is our watch-word. It shall be done to-night. Champagne!—champagne!—Let us drink back our courage and our luck!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Corridor in LADY BELGRAVE'S. *Stage dark. Enter* LUCY *looking behind—she stands watching at the side.*

LUCY.

Well! it's no business of mine, that's certain—But I'm not to shut my eyes, I s'pose—fine goings on, indeed!—Miss Fanny and a man locked up in that little room—what can they be doing?—I'm sure I can't tell—but I know I shouldn't like to be there in her place—I have a character to lose. There they are?—they're coming out—I'll swear to Miss Fanny!—He's bending over and talking to her—so well he may! I'll leave the place—I'll give notice to quit. It's scandalous—and all the company coming—and that little room has another door going into the ball-room—it's quite barefaced. Miss Fanny Belgrave—faugh! and she to be married to Mr. Wyndham—poor Mr. Wyndham!—I pity him, that I do,—little does he think this night—hush!—somebody's coming—this must be the seductive villain!

Enter HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE *from the side at which* LUCY *entered.*

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

How confoundedly dark it is—but it's too late to repent.

LUCY (*aside*).

Oh! the wicked wretch.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

I must get out of the scrape as well as I can.

LUCY (*aside*).

Get out of the scrape!

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

But I mustn't let any one suspect me of such folly—I'll disown the business altogether.

LUCY (*aside*).

He'll disown it—he will.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

To lose myself in these dark passages from a mere vagrant curiosity to have a peep at Miss Belgrave before she went into the ball-room.

LUCY (*aside*).

He confesses it, then.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

There's a lamp at the end of the passage—I'll go that way—(*as he turns,* LUCY *crosses, and he knocks against her*) Bless me! who's that?

LUCY.

Oh! Lord—who's there?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Don't be frightened—(*aside*) what an awkward predicament!—to be caught in such a place.—(*Aloud*) You're quite in a tremble, my dear.

LUCY.

Don't dear me—take off your hands or I'll scream—

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Well, you needn't make such a noise—(*aside*) I'll try and get away. (*She crosses him again.*)

LUCY.

Oh! gracious—what a knock!

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Well, well,—there, there—

LUCY.

Who are you? The plate closet is on the landing—

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Much obliged to you for the information! She doesn't think I'm a thief—the plate closet!—Bagh!—

LUCY.

The little room!—bagh!—

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

What does she mean?—Isn't it Lucy?—to be sure it is! (*attempts to put his arms round her*) Oh! my dear Lucy, I'm so glad it's only you.

LUCY.

Only me! you odious deceiver.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

'Pon my life, I don't understand you.

LUCY.

Do you understand that? there?—there?—(*pointing*).

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

That? there?—there?—

LUCY.

You're Mr. Pause.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

The *Hon.* Cavendish Pause.

LUCY.

I know—and you were trying to pick out of me the other day all about Miss Belgrave's temper.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Pick out of you?—pick?—no—no—

LUCY.

Yes—yes—but I see through it all now—but I'll lose my place for you, I will!

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

(*Aside and making his way out.*) Is the wench cracked? She'll lose her place for me, will she? he! he! he!—Ah! there's the lamp again—I'm sure I won't get her another. (*Turning, and aloud as he is going off*) Lucy—Lucy—hist! hist! Lucy! there!—there! [*Exit, tittering.*

LUCY.

The impudence of that takes away my breath. There's nothing like your quality folks for impudence through thick and thin. "I'm so glad it's only you, Lucy!" *only*—I'm sure I'm as good flesh and blood as she, and I don't see what better any woman can be in the dark. Who have we here now? I declare, Mr. Wortley.

Enter MR. WORTLEY *at the same side.*

WORTLEY.

Plague on them—why don't they put more light in this dingy passage?

LUCY (*aside*).

I've a great mind to tell him every thing—he's such a discreet old gentleman.

WORTLEY.

I was within an ace of breaking my head against a door there.

LUCY (*coming forward*).

Oh! sir, that door—

WORTLEY.

Eh!

LUCY.

'Tis me, sir,—Lucy, sir.

WORTLEY.

Ha! Lucy—well, what about the door?

LUCY.

If that door could speak, sir—

WORTLEY.

Creak you mean—why, if it could, we'd get it oiled, Lucy.

Enter WYNDHAM *behind at the opposite side.*

WYNDHAM.

I'm sure it was Pause I passed just now—what can have carried him to this part of the house?

LUCY.

It isn't my place to talk of my young lady, sir; but I say again, if that door *could* speak—

WORTLEY.

Lucy—Lucy—don't talk conundrums. I hate mysteries of all kinds—speak out—

LUCY.

I would, sir, but I don't like to betray Miss Belgrave's secret.

WYNDHAM (*aside*).

Miss Belgrave's secret. So—so!—

WORTLEY.

Secret! I never had a secret in my life. I'd as soon turn receiver of stolen goods as receiver of a secret—I wouldn't keep a secret—and if Miss Belgrave has a secret, the sooner she gets rid of it the better.

LUCY.

Don't press me, sir,—pray don't.

WORTLEY.

You're not obliged to criminate yourself, but—

LUCY.

Criminate myself? all I mean to say is, that I want to give warning—and leave this house—I can stay in it no longer.

WORTLEY.

Well, give warning, and go as soon as you please. I didn't hire you.

LUCY.

No, but Miss Belgrave did: and I am resolved, after what has taken place, to give her the *coup de grace*.

WORTLEY.

Well done, upon my word; but, perhaps, before you go, Lucy, you'd have the goodness to explain what *has* taken place.

LUCY.

Why, sir, Miss Fanny and a man were closeted in that room alone, five, ten, twenty minutes—more! I leave it to you to judge, sir, whether I can remain any longer in Miss Belgrave's service.

WORTLEY.

To be very candid with you, then, I think you cannot. I shall go to her this moment, and advise her to discharge you at once. [*Exit.*

LUCY.

Oh! the Turk.

WYNDHAM (*coming forward*).

Now, mistress abigail; who was the man in the room?

LUCY (*falling on her knees*).

Lord, Mr. Wyndham!

WYNDHAM.

I give you one quarter of a second—the man's name—

LUCY.

P—a—u—s—e! It's out!

WYNDHAM.

Pause! I knew it. I met him at the head of the stairs.

LUCY.

Oh! sir, it's too true! and when he came out, he comes this way talking to himself, and saying it was too late to repent—

WYNDHAM.

Infernal hypocrite!

LUCY.

And that he'd disown it altogether.

WYNDHAM.

Disown it? Did he say he'd disown it?

LUCY.

He did, indeed, sir; I thought that the worst of all; when I taxed him with his cruel conduct, he tittered and chuckled and went off like a devil incarnate.

WYNDHAM.

Oh! perfidious Fanny—he'll disown it—there, Lucy—(*giving her money*) if they discharge you, come to me—I'll provide handsomely for you. He will—I'll blow him into impalpable dust! (*Rushes out.*)

LUCY.

Mr. Wyndham *is* a gentleman. What a pity he should be so ill used. But the truth is, she never was fit for him. I always thought so. She had a sort of double way of looking at herself in the glass, that I never liked—over one shoulder and someway round the other at the same time. Mr. Wyndham has no great loss of her, especially if he provides handsomely for me. Who knows what's on the cards the next shuffle and cut?

[*Exit, with an air of grandeur.*

SCENE THE LAST.

The Ball-room, brilliantly illuminated. The back part of the stage crowded with dancers, and marked off from the front by slender pillars with lofty arches between. Several groups scattered about, sitting and standing. In the centre LADY PIERREPOINT, LADY MATCHMAKER, LADY BLAIZE, MRS. GRANT, MISS CAST-OFF, SIR HYACINTH SHARP, MR. SHADOW, and others.

OMNES.

Ah! ha! ha!

LADY MATCHMAKER.

But you are so censorious, Sir Hyacinth.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Witty, it must be allowed on all hands, but shockingly ill-natured.

SIR HYACINTH.

And what is wit, your Ladyship, without ill-nature? Flat champagne—iced pepper—sparkling eyes with the lids down—

SHADOW.

The Venus de' Medici in a boat cloak.

SIR HYACINTH.

Ill-nature is the salt of conversation. The art is to sprinkle just enough to keep it in flavour, and no more. Pickled wit sets one's blood in a fever, and makes us single men drink most egregiously.

SHADOW.

It is only fit, like salt junk, for a long sea voyage, when you can't get any fresh provisions.

MRS. GRANT.

But your ill-natured wit is always scandalous.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Why can't people try to be witty and good-natured at the same time?

SIR HYACINTH.

Nature, madam, has forbid the bans. Wit and good-nature are antagonist elements, and neutralize each other.

SHADOW.

A good-natured wit would be as great an anomaly as—

SIR HYACINTH (*interrupting him*).

A good-natured beauty.

MISS CAST-OFF.

But not half so great a fool.

SHADOW.

No, because the wit *may* retrieve his reputation—

SIR HYACINTH.

But the beauty never can!

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Well, I should like to see a man of fashion always gay, and never sarcastic; brilliant as Voltaire, but truthful as—

SHADOW.

Your Ladyship!

SIR HYACINTH.

So, should I! If your Ladyship should ever catch such a monster, you must positively advertise him. He would draw greater crowds than the Weather Almanack, or—

SHADOW.

The Great Western Railway.

LADY BLAIZE.

And is Truth also, a forbidden ingredient?

SHADOW.

It is impracticable.

SIR HYACINTH.

Truth is an impossibility. There is no such thing extant in the universe. It has no more existence than the unknown quantity in algebra—

SHADOW.

Or the elixir vitæ—

SIR HYACINTH.

Or the philosopher's stone. It would encumber one horribly, and make one's conversation as grave as an epitaph. The noble part of wit—the ethereal essence—is the invention. A fact, here and there, is useful—it forms the grosser material; but fiction is the spiritual life. Truth is the mere dead body—imagination, the soul.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Well, well; will you lay aside your imagination for once, and tell us the actual truth about this approaching marriage.

LADY BLAIZE.

Who is Mr. Baldwin?

MRS. GRANT.

And is it all off with Sir Harry?

SIR HYACINTH.

But you must not give us as your authority—

LADIES.

Oh! no—of course not.

SIR HYACINTH.

Then it is *said* that Miss Temple and Mr. Baldwin are irretrievably engaged—

SHADOW.

That, in short, this ball is to be considered as a sort of public announcement of the interesting fact.

SIR HYACINTH SHARP.

I *have* heard that Mr. Baldwin purchased Sir Harry out and out—that is to say, won a large sum of money from him at *ecarté*, and forgave him the debt in consideration of his surrendering the lady.

LADIES.

Ha! ha! ha!

SIR HYACINTH SHARP.

They *do* say—

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Well, what do they say?

SIR HYACINTH SHARP.

Pray transfer the question—here is Sir Harry himself.

Enter SIR HARRY VIVID.

LADIES (*crowding round him*).

Oh! Sir Harry, we are so glad you are come.

LADY MATCHMAKER.

Now, we shall hear the whole story—

MRS. GRANT.

An authentic statement—

SIR HYACINTH SHARP.

They want an authentic statement, Sir Harry. I have already assured them there's no such thing on record.

LADY PIERREPOINT.

Now do pray, tell us, is it true that Miss Temple—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I beg your pardon—is that Miss Belgrave—yes—it is—excuse me—(*bows to the group, passes on to the back, and enters into conversation with* FANNY).

LADY PIERREPOINT (*aside*).

It's a safe maxim to believe only the half of what we hear; but the difficulty is to know which half. If Sir Harry really lost the young lady over a game of *ecarté*, all I can say is, that he carries it off with a wonderful flow of spirits. I'll go and study Miss Temple. (*She goes up, followed by the rest.*)

(*A group, in the midst of which are* MRS. DOUBTFUL *and* HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE, *comes down the stage on one side, and on the opposite side* MR. DOUBTFUL *watching them.*)

DOUBTFUL.

There she is—in the midst of a bevy of fops and chatterers; and Pause, too, the old fool. How preposterous he looks—I'll draw him off—hist! (*making signs to* PAUSE, *who comes over to him*) Are you not ashamed of yourself?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Eh!

DOUBTFUL.

At your time of life—to jibe and frolic with my wife?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Pooh! (*Follows the group off the stage.*)

DOUBTFUL.

There now—that's the way—flirt with a married woman—and bite off her husband's head if he dare to say a word. She's gone. Heaven knows what part of the house I'd find her in now. I'll bring this business to a close. I'll order the carriage immediately. [*Goes up the stage.*

Enter WYNDHAM.

WYNDHAM.

I've looked for her through all the rooms in vain. It's too evident she shuns me.

Enter FANNY BELGRAVE.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Ah! where have you been all the evening?

WYNDHAM.

'Tis I, madam, ought to ask that question. Good heavens! how can you be so calm after what has taken place?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Why not?

WYNDHAM.

Why not? I wonder you do not sink into the earth at sight of the man you have so deeply wronged.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Have you been dancing?

WYNDHAM.

Yes—dancing mad!

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Upon my word, I think so (*laughing*).

WYNDHAM.

The little room, madam:—Pause, madam!—

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Pause! madam!—the little room, madam!—oh! I see it all—ha! ha!

WYNDHAM.

She is laughing at me. But here is the great delinquent himself.

Enter The HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

So, sir, I have fallen in with you at last.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

If I might judge from your manner, sir, it would seem that you have fallen out with me at last.

WYNDHAM.

You will give me at once the satisfaction due to a gentleman.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

I shall most certainly do nothing of the kind. Duelling

is discountenanced by the House of Lords as well as by common sense.

WYNDHAM.

Then I am to understand that you refuse to make reparation for the injury I have sustained at your hands.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

At my hands? I deny it, sir, with both my hands.

WYNDHAM.

I was prepared for this pitiful evasion. You said you would disclaim it.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

I did?

WYNDHAM.

You did.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Then I have kept my word, although I haven't the smallest recollection of the circumstance.

WYNDHAM.

Monstrous! no recollection of being closeted with this lady half an hour ago?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Ha! ha!

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Now I shouldn't be at all astonished if I were to be found out committing a burglary without knowing it. One gentleman accuses me of gibing and frolicking with his wife, and I scarcely escape from him when another accuses me of being closeted with his mistress. *I* run the risk of an intrigue—*I*—such as I am. I wonder what will come next. [*Exit.*

Enter SIR HARRY VIVID.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

My dear Wyndham, I can satisfy you on every point. You have nearly frightened the wits out of poor Pause, the best natured eccentric alive. It was I who was closeted with Miss Belgrave. But we were not alone. We had a little conspiracy, of which you shall know every thing by-and-by. Go after Pause, and explain. (*Exit* WYNDHAM *reluctantly. To* FANNY) You have rendered me the most effectual service—

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Quite as much for Adelaide's sake as yours—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

And she fancies that I really believe this report?

FANNY BELGRAVE.

She is convinced of it.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

And that I am involved in an affair with the other lady? Ha! ha! ha! But here she is—for heaven's sake don't let us be seen together.

[FANNY BELGRAVE *crosses and exit.*

ADELAIDE TEMPLE *comes down.*

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Miss Temple, your slave—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Sir Harry Vivid—(*aside*) his assurance is incredible.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

She's as cool as a fountain. I'll astonish her.—(*To* ADELAIDE) Is the report true that Miss Temple is really—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I am not responsible for reports—but since it has transpired—I suppose I must endure the congratulations of my acquaintances.—(*Aside*) Now for an explosion.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*with supercilious indifference*).

It's all fancy. But, for my part, I cannot comprehend even the abstract idea of matrimony at this period of the year. My opinion is—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Sir Harry Vivid!

SIR HARRY VIVID.

That all marriages ought to be postponed to the end of the season.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I beg, sir—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

We should take our farewell of liberty at the melancholy time when the town is breaking up, and all the people are separating to make themselves miserable after their own fashion in the country.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*aside*).

This insolence is unendurable. (*To him*) I suppose you don't believe, then—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

We hear it is altogether a most romantic affair—what is popularly called a love-match. But I hope, for the sake of the example, there's no truth in that!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Then, sir, for the sake of the example, you may inform your libertine friends, that where I give my hand, I also give my heart.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Imposing sentiment!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

But, it seems, this is not the *only* romantic affair on the tapis.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Indeed!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

We hear that a baronet of fashionable celebrity—

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

Now comes my turn!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Has fallen in love lately with a country beauty, well known in the ring in Hyde Park by her spotted grays—silver and azure liveries—dark blue phaeton. Do you know such an equipage?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Can't say I ever saw anything resembling it.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

The lady is from Shropshire. Of course you never heard of her?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Never.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Do you mean to say, Sir Harry Vivid?—(*aside*) Oh! it's useless—he'd deny any thing. (*To him*) Will you answer me one question frankly?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

A thousand—spotted liveries—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Don't mind the spotted liveries. Are you in favour of throwing open gentlemen's domains to the public?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Certainly not. I've got a very pretty estate of my own—the only romantic part of my possessions—and I lately built a ten-foot wall round it.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Then you never joined a society for such a purpose?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Never.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*raising her hands*).

Oh! Sir Harry Vivid—Sir Harry Vivid—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Oh! Miss Temple—Miss Temple—what is the matter?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Nothing. You actually have not moved a muscle all the time.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Why should I move a muscle?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh! no reason on earth.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

None that I know of.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Marvellous!

(BALDWIN *appears at the back, flushed and in excited spirits*).

Ha! Mr. Baldwin. Truant! why didn't you come earlier?

BALDWIN.

Have you waited for me?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

There's a reasonable question.

BALDWIN.

You must not expect me to be reasonable at such a time —who could be reasonable under such circumstances—on the threshold of Paradise? — reasonable! I'm soaring in the clouds—my brain and heart are throbbing too fast for reason!

SIR HARRY VIVID (*aside*).

Come, that's pretty well. The *gentleman's* in earnest, at all events.

BALDWIN.

If I do not mistake, this is Sir Harry Vivid, I have heard you talk of. Will you make me known to him.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Mr. Baldwin—Sir Harry Vivid.

BALDWIN.

I am proud to make your acquaintance, Sir Harry. Your name is perfectly familiar to me.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I cannot say so much for yours, Mr. —— what was the name?

BALDWIN.

Baldwin—Baldwin.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Oh! Baldwin—an ancient name that.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I think there was a Baldwin, Count of Flanders.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

No doubt, madam, the gentleman will give you a Flemish account of his name. (FANNY *comes down the centre.*) Miss Belgrave, you have just arrived in time to rescue me. We are rather in the way here; allow me to find you a seat. (*Leads her to a lounger. They sit.*)

BALDWIN (*aside*).

He's in the very mood to break with her. I must push my advantage to extremities. (*To her*) I am afraid you have offended Sir Harry.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*contemptuously*).

Offend him!—

BALDWIN.

I mean wounded—hurt him—(*aside to her*). Hem! (*aloud*) Come, let us be generous, I'm sure I, at least, am every way disposed to make allowances for him.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*to* FANNY).

Do you hear that?

BALDWIN.

He cannot bear to see us so happy. How could you expect it? How should I feel, were he in my place and I in his?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

We certainly ought not to boast too much of our felicity.

SIR HARRY VIVID (*to* FANNY).

That's true, however.

BALDWIN.

But we must not lose sight of our own happiness, nevertheless. I have written to all our friends, announcing the joyful intelligence.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*aside to him*).

No—no—don't say that.

BALDWIN (*not heeding her*).

Indeed, I have been so industrious that I do not think there is a single individual who knows us, ignorant of the happy event. You know you wished it to be as public as possible?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Oh!—yes—yes.

BALDWIN.

I have fulfilled your wishes to the utmost (*takes her hand, which she tries to withdraw*). This exquisite little hand—that I can now clasp freely—that I have dreamed of! 'Tis very beautiful!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*aside to him*).

There—that will do.

BALDWIN (*not heeding her*).

Sweet Adelaide! my own!—There's magic in the word:—my own! my very own!—To say that aloud, alone, and listen till it return upon my ears, as from a distance, laden with sighs?—'tis a blessed word—my own! (*She exhibits uneasiness throughout.*)

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*aside to him*).

That's quite sufficient. He will think you're in earnest.

BALDWIN (*not heeding her*).

Nothing on earth can separate us, now. My bride in the

eyes of all the world—pledged by your own voluntary act —bound by indissoluble ties—my bride, in the sight of Heaven!

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*getting free and exhibiting alarm*).

Merciful powers! he's serious!

SIR HARRY VIVID (*coming down and standing in the centre*).

The last thing I should willingly do would be to interfere with any body's private amusement; but don't you think—Mr. Baldwin—you have carried this imposition far enough?

BALDWIN.

Imposition?—you jest.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I am afraid, sir, you will find it rather a sorry jest.

BALDWIN.

Sir, you shall answer this severely.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*interposing*).

For my sake, gentlemen—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Don't be alarmed, madam. We shall not quarrel.—(*To Baldwin*) I have no inclination to put the worst construction upon your conduct. Be honest, and confess that all this passionate declamation was a mere masquerade.

BALDWIN.

You add contumely to insult. Confess? to you? There stands the lady—our engagement is notorious—she acknowledges it—I glory in it. By what authority do you meddle between us?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Miss Temple—you hear—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

I am overwhelmed. I know not what to say.

BALDWIN.

You observe, sir, from her own lips—

SIR HARRY VIVID (*to* ADELAIDE).

I certainly have no right to interfere; but, once more in sober sadness—I do not ask you to speak—your silence will be token enough.

BALDWIN.

Remember, madam, what brought me here—for whose sake I came. Your honour is involved in the confidence you reposed in me.

(ADELAIDE TEMPLE *remains silent.*)

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Good God! she is silent!

FANNY BELGRAVE.

Cousin, speak—

SIR HARRY VIVID (*to* FANNY).

You perceive she is silent still. We have both been deceived.

BALDWIN.

I trust, sir, you are now satisfied this is no masquerade; and will at once withdraw. For your unwarrantable aspersions, I shall find a time—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

You shall find me ready, sir. Miss Temple, I beg pardon for my intrusion. I frankly acknowledge I have taken an inexcusable liberty, but it was under an erroneous impression. We are all liable to mistakes, yet this is a sort

of mistake which I should have thought impossible. Five minutes ago, had a thousand tongues testified that which you have just admitted by your silence, I would not have believed them. But it is over.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE (*to* FANNY).

Fanny, I am stunned by my own folly.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

But before I take my leave, I have an account to settle here (*to* BALDWIN), which will not admit of delay.

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

And I another; I am recovering myself.—I request Sir Harry will not go until *my* account with that gentleman is settled also.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

What is the meaning of this?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

You shall hear. Mr. Baldwin, whatever may be the consequences, I will not violate the confidence I have asked and given. Nor will you, on your part, abuse that confidence by an untruth. I restore you your freedom, and beg to resume my own.

BALDWIN.

You cannot, madam—you cannot restore my freedom, if you would. It is too late to think of retreating from the position in which you have placed yourself.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

No, sir, not too late, since you have placed yourself in a position from which you must retreat. Disguise is now needless, and would be cruel to all parties. There was a time when Mordaunt would have scorned so base a subter-

fuge. Let me hope that he will still retrieve his name and honour.

BALDWIN.

Mordaunt! Spare me!—I am lost!

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Tarnished it may be, but not so defaced but that you may once again pass current through the world at your original value. You want only the resolution to be just to yourself.

BALDWIN.

You must not be surprised at the amazement I betray. I am fascinated—wrought upon by thoughts I dare not fashion into language—humiliated below contempt—and in *her* presence too!—to whom I aspired!—She who, unknowingly, drew me back from the vortex into which I was rapidly descending!—And all those hasty pageants of the imagination fading into air at a word. Mordaunt! I thought the very name was engulphed in the abyss of the past! Where did you learn this?

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Here is my authority.

(*He goes to the side, opens a door, and brings forward* CLARA.)

BALDWIN.

Clara!—my heart springs to her—the illusion is over—'twas for this the spell of a transitory passion redeemed me from a life of degradation—Clara! can you forgive me?

CLARA.

Can you forgive yourself? I have nothing to forgive.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

But much to explain! (*Half-aside, playfully, to* CLARA) Remember, there must be no revenge on any account!

BALDWIN (*to* ADELAIDE).

To you, madam, I know not how to apologize—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Then don't attempt it. All that need be said is, that you played your part so skilfully, that at last you began to think it real yourself. But the lady—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

Permit me to introduce her;—she is known in the ring by her spotted grays and blue phaeton, and has only very recently arrived in town from Shropshire.

BALDWIN.

Madam, this is only another of my transgressions; I confess I am thoroughly ashamed of all that has passed. To you, Clara, if you will take charge of shattered nerves, and a spirit wounded by the world, but strong in good resolves, I dedicate the rest of my life. Let the faults of Baldwin be forgotten in the atoning efforts of Mordaunt. And now, I trust, madam (*to* ADELAIDE), that nothing I have said of Sir Harry Vivid—

SIR HARRY VIVID.

In mercy's name, leave Sir Harry Vivid to vindicate himself. I dare say we shall find some points of agreement presently, when we are left alone! But something must be done to assist your good intentions. Your private fortune is gone—Clara has none—excuse my candour—we must make a portion for Clara.

BALDWIN.

No—I have too much pride left for that: pride, I hope, of the right kind. I will not be pensioned like an outcast, but will be redeemed like a man, with a man's energies, and men's honest sympathies. The best help you can give, or I receive, is recognition of my altered life. Let me live down my errors.—Let the world be open to me again, if I show myself—as I shall—worthy of its fellowship.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

I respect your feelings, and will observe them. Is there nothing to be forgiven here? (*turning to* ADELAIDE) nothing to be cleared up?—No misgivings still lurking in some one's heart?

ADELAIDE.

None—not one. I have a decided objection to explanations, particularly when I have to make them myself. So I will make a bargain.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

With all my heart. You shall draw up the articles—Fanny shall witness them—and I will sign, seal, and deliver, whenever you please.

(SIR HARRY, ADELAIDE, *and* FANNY *retire to the back.*)

BALDWIN.

Come, Clara; we have much to talk of, and much to arrange for the future. You do forgive me—I read it in your eyes.

CLARA.

Forgiveness is in the tears that blind them!—all is forgotten—all but your early goodness to me in years gone by. The interval is as if it had never been. I knew you would return at last—I lived on that hope—thank God! I have lived to see it realized.

BALDWIN.

Your fortitude makes me brave.—Come—come—We shall be wiser and happier for all this, by and by.

(MRS. DOUBTFUL *comes down.*)

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

My dear Adelaide, I congratulate you;—Sir Harry—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Well—but may we congratulate you? Is there any hope of improvement?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I don't know—I have carried my point—but I don't like carrying points. I like things to be conceded to me, and to go on quietly. Have you seen him?

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Only at a distance.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Look!—I can scarcely believe my eyes. (*A gallopade is danced down to the front of the stage*—MR. DOUBTFUL *in the midst. When he sees* MRS. DOUBTFUL, *he stops suddenly, and looks abashed. The rest of the dancers go off.*) Mr. Doubtful!

DOUBTFUL.

My dear!

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

You have been gallopading.

DOUBTFUL.

I have, my love.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

I thought you objected on principle to all such amusements.

DOUBTFUL.

I thought so too; but I find I don't.—Mrs. Doubtful, I've been in the wrong all my life.

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

Except once.

DOUBTFUL.

When was that?

MRS. DOUBTFUL.

When you married me.

DOUBTFUL.

That is well said, and you shall find it fruitful of truth. Pardon me, Harriet, the infirmities of a temper—weak, but not wanting in kindness. I see my fault—that is more than half way to amendment. You shall blind my eyes, and lead me the other half.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

And not a word of apology to me! I think I shall marry one day or another, and revenge myself upon both sexes.

FANNY BELGRAVE.

What! have you not made up your mind yet?

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

Miss Belgrave, I *did* make it up, but—

ADELAIDE TEMPLE.

Ah! that *but*—half the men of the present day are fairly ruined by *ifs* and *buts*.

HON. CAVENDISH PAUSE.

I was too late. I am one of that doomed race that never was in time yet.

SIR HARRY VIVID.

My friend Wyndham is in the same dilemma—you can easily get before him.

WYNDHAM.

Not now, Sir Harry, I flatter myself.

WORTLEY.

Bless you, Wyndham is quite at home now.

CLARA.

And what more can the most restless ambition achieve? Home!—to make a home, and consecrate it to truth and pure affection—a reality which wealth cannot purchase, which poverty cannot destroy, which station cannot improve, which poetry cannot exaggerate!

BALDWIN.

Such a home, my patient Clara! shall be thine!

EPILOGUE.

SPOKEN BY MISS CHARLES AND MR. WEBSTER.

MISS CHARLES *enters fluttered, followed by* MR. WEBSTER *hurriedly.*

MR. WEBSTER.

FORGOT the Epilogue, Miss Charles? Forgot
The very point and sequel of the plot?
A marriage without issue—the Epilogue
Left out? What *shall* I do?

MISS CHARLES.

Can't you prorogue
The house?

MR. WEBSTER.

Nonsense!

MISS CHARLES.

Make an apology.

MR. WEBSTER.

But what excuse?

MISS CHARLES.

Oh! throw it all on me.

MR. WEBSTER.

Impossible! You're in the bills to-night
To speak it.

MISS CHARLES.

Well, but—I'm in such a fright,
My recollection of the lines so crude—

MR. WEBSTER.

You'd better read it then—

MISS CHARLES.

I wish I could!

MR. WEBSTER.

Why not?

MISS CHARLES.

The truth is, Mr. Webster—stop
Till I collect myself—I let it drop
On Monday in the green-room—

MR. WEBSTER.

Sure?

MISS CHARLES.

Almost.

MR. WEBSTER.

Then I'll recover it—unless it's lost. [*Exit.*

MISS CHARLES.

That's quite delightful!—I'm so glad he's gone—
Two can't speak Ep'logues half so well as one.

Hush!—hush!—a moment—hush!—while he's away—
Now, in a whisper—Do you like the play?

If that's the way you whisper confidentially,
'Tis a stage whisper uttered most potentially!

Now, for my own part, in this piece I *can* see
Only one thing that really hits my fancy,
And that's the title—"Marriage!"—What a hoard
Of strange emotions in that tiny word!
The throbs, the tremors, wild delights, and fears
That plough the heart at marriageable years,
All flutter round the very thought—to marry!—
Throwing one's nerves into a horrid flurry.

But when you're married, the delusion's over;
No more finesse—no coquetry—no lover.
The dear, delicious dream of influence ends,
And turns your men acquaintance into—*friends*.
Think of poor Mrs. Doubtful—to be sure
Her husband was a terrible old bore;
Yet, taking them *au pied de la lettre*,
I scarcely know where we could find much better.
Baldwin?—a flattering rogue—a grave Jack Horner,
To flirt a *tête-à-tête* with in a corner.
Wyndham?—a sloth!—a creature of conventions,
Full of the most respectable intentions.
And Pause—fit for a lord cut in court-plaster,
Such as he is—but not a lord and master!

Then which amongst them might one choose to marry?
Why—if one *were* to choose—perhaps Sir Harry;
Perhaps!—the word is made of blushes—Yes!
Sounds easier, and has more appropriateness,
The cue to marriage—happier still if you
To this night's "Marriage" will respond Yes! too.

Re-enter MR. WEBSTER.

MR. WEBSTER.

I've found it! What a noise they're making here—

MISS CHARLES.

'Tis the echo of the epilogue you hear;
A gracious sound—

MR. WEBSTER.

Inspiring us with courage,
When *such* friends wish us joy upon our "Marriage."

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